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BBC RADIO 3 Full April listings inside See p100

80th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Daniel Barenboim

The legendary maestro on his mission to unite the world through music

Joseph Middleton
The leading accompanist on the magic of song

Encore! Encore!
Is the future bleak for this age-old concert tradition?

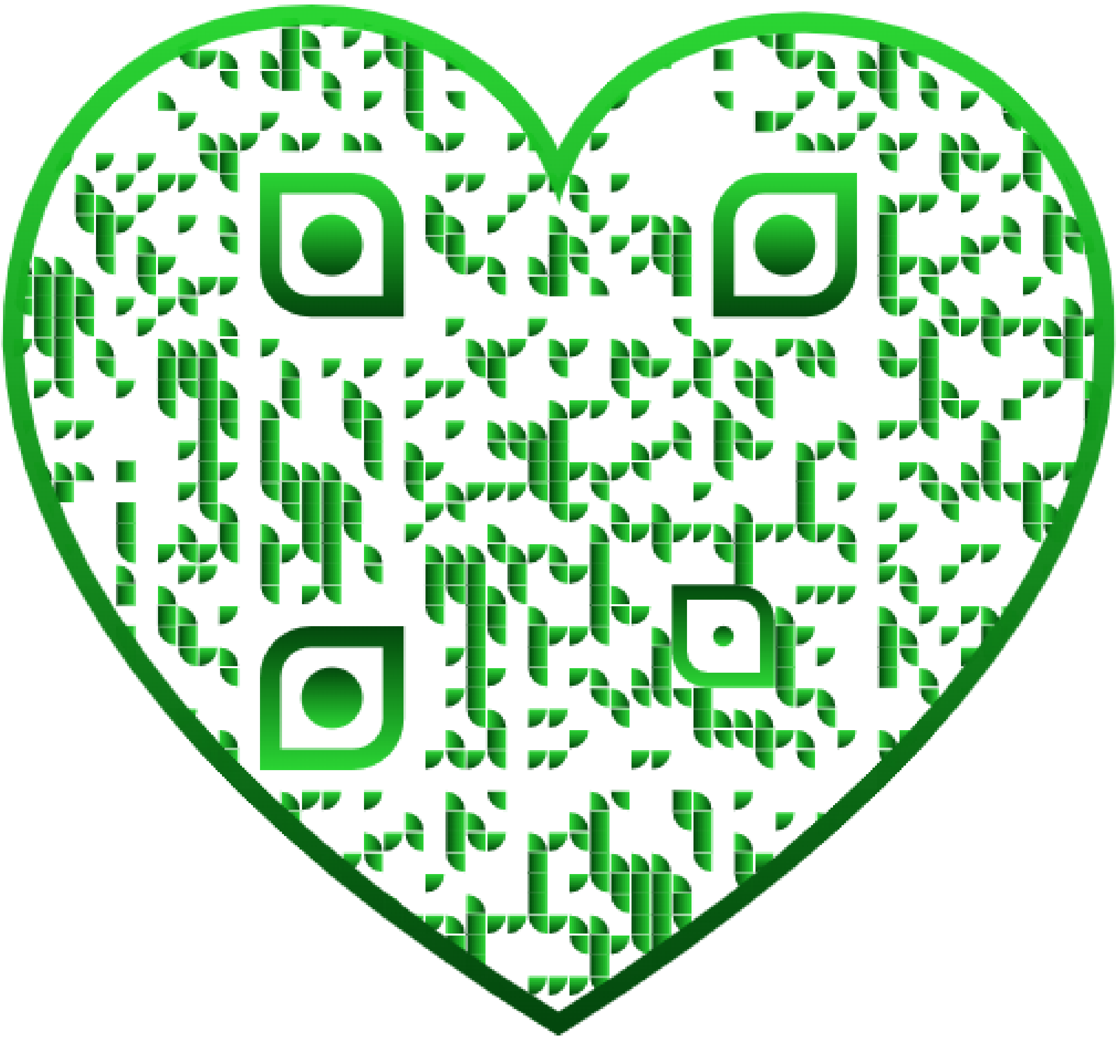
Rebecca Clarke
Discover the 20th century's pioneering viola composer

Jeannette Sorrell
The conductor's musical loves

Gerald Barry
We meet an Irish original

Danielle de Niese
A look back with the soprano

100 reviews by the world's finest critics
Recordings & books – see p68



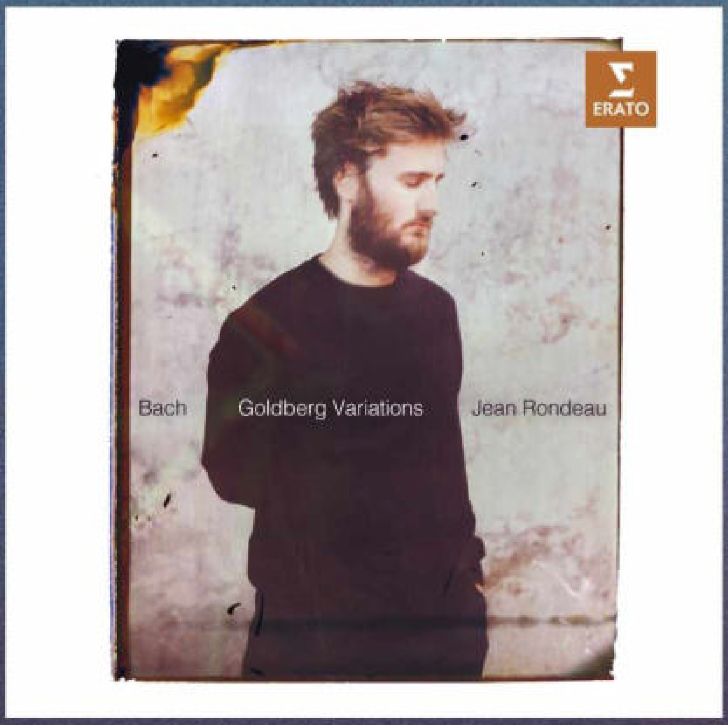
WARNER CLASSICS ERATO

RHAPSODY
MARTIN JAMES BARTLETT

“The wit and colour in Martin James Bartlett’s playing was thrilling,” noted The Times, when Martin James Bartlett performed Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* at the BBC Proms. The piece, along with Rachmaninov’s *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, now finds itself at the centre of the programme for Martin’s new album, along with seven shorter pieces for solo piano.

MOZART COMPLETE PIANO CONCERTOS
ELISABETH LEONSKAJA

Renewing and cementing a relationship that dates back to the 1980s, in Elisabeth Leonskaja’s first release under her new Warner Classics contract - recorded in Breman in early 2021 - the distinguished pianist brings a lifetime of wisdom, experience, integrity and passion to the Mozart piano sonatas.



J.S. BACH GOLDBERG VARIATIONS
JEAN RONDEAU

While preparing for this recording, Rondeau consulted an original edition of the score from the 1740s - containing markings and corrections made by Bach himself. As Rondeau says, “Through delving into this precious musicological source, I was able to make what I felt to be the most authentic choices.”

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Welcome

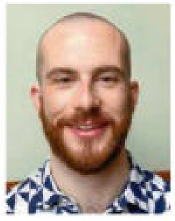
Throughout his long career, pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim has remained at the top of his game. Declared 'a phenomenon' at the age of just 11 by Wilhelm Furtwängler, the prodigy went on to enjoy the kind of success that too often fails to materialise for such exceptionally gifted youngsters. Respected equally for his technical skill and sense of musicianship, Barenboim's keen intellect has always shone through. At the heart of his artistic and philosophical approach is a sense of balance – between discipline and passion, modesty and assurance – and a strong belief that music can help to overcome 'the gulfs between people'. Jessica Duchen speaks to the venerable musician as he approaches his 80th birthday on page 26.

One of Barenboim's myriad projects in 2022 is a new album of his favourite encores. The post-concert performance is, of course, a long-established tradition – though, as Brian Wise discovers on page 38, changing tastes have led to less emphasis on showy displays as works from multiple genres have entered the fray. But no matter the repertoire, the encore is often the most relaxed part of the concert – where the artist might speak directly to the audience and where listeners feel freer to express their admiration. Richard Morrison makes the case for more flexible programmes throughout on page 25.

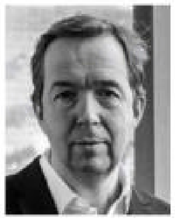
Charlotte Smith *Editor*

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

Ariane Todes
Writer and editor
'Eye contact in music isn't discussed or taught much, but hearing violinist Arnold Steinhardt recall a look he shared with Jacqueline du Pré in 1965 was proof of its power – a moment I shall remember forever.' ***Page 42***



Tom Stewart
Writer and editor
'My conversation with Gerald Barry was full of the same twists and turns you can hear in his music, which draws on numerous sources – musical and otherwise – without losing direction or its sense of mischief.' ***Page 46***



Mikel Toms
Conductor and writer
'What a joy to listen to so many recordings of *The Dream of Gerontius*, from Elgar's own onwards. It's like witnessing this glorious masterpiece evolve, establishing its place in the public's consciousness.' ***Page 62***

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The leading pianist and conductor tells *Jessica Duchen* about his mission to bring people together with music

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The encore has had an uneven history and often an uncertain future, explains *Brian Wise*

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Eye contact can be vital in communication but, asks *Ariane Todes*, how necessary is it to make music?

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EDITORIAL
Plus our favourite piece of music to be performed as an encore (see p38)

Editor Charlotte Smith
Gavotte en Rondeau from Bach's Partita for Solo Violin No. 3
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Mozart's Rondo alla Turca, arr. Volodos
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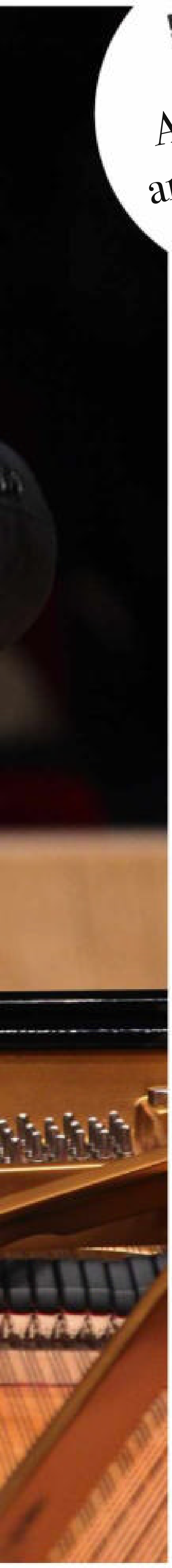

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Your guide to the best new recordings and books

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Mozart
Complete Piano Sonatas

'Leonskaja is one of those rare pianists who can run the gamut from gracious, witty charm to orchestral sonorities'

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LETTER of the MONTH

Fast mover : France's TGV inspired Michael Nyman

GETTY

Full speed ahead

A notable omission from Julia Winterson's *Trains of thought* feature (March) is Michael Nyman's pulse-pumping *Musique à Grande Vitesse*, specially commissioned for the launch of the Paris-Lille high-speed TGV line and premiered in 1993. The sensation of speeding at up to 200mph, with the countryside flashing past, can be heard right from the start, as the Michael Nyman Band sets up a steady, pounding rhythm before the orchestra makes its entrance. The work's rhythmic drive waxes and wanes before reaching an almighty percussive apotheosis in the final section. I first heard the work in a live performance at the Royal Festival Hall and it always came to mind when we took the TGV from London to Paris. The concert was also memorable as we bumped into Nyman during the interval. Our young daughter mentioned she was learning pieces from his film score for *The Piano*, at which he expressed considerable admiration as he thought they were especially difficult.
Cedric Peachey, *Woodbury*

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Early departure

In her otherwise interesting and thorough *Trains of Thought* (see also left), Julia Winterson mentions Pierre Schaeffer's 1948 *Étude aux chemins de fer* but leaves out – leaves on the line? – reference to his earlier compatriot Alkan's similarly titled piano étude, *Le chemin de fer*, Op. 27. Dating from more than a century earlier, in 1844, it is one of the earliest musical examples after Johann Strauss I's *Eisenbahn-Lust-Walzer* (which Winterson discusses) in the long history of rail journey portrayal.
Alistair Hinton, *Hereford*

Holst's vicar

I enjoyed accompanying Jeremy Pound and friends on their *Walk With Holst* (March). However, while realising that it would have made for a very long detour, I was sorry they didn't acknowledge Holst's time in Thaxted in Essex, where he collaborated with the controversial vicar Father Conrad Noel – Holst and his family lived in Thaxted from 1917-25. The so-called 'Red Vicar', Noel was, in spite of his patrician origins, a devoted if idiosyncratic member of the Christian Socialist movement – he was appointed to his post in Thaxted by the socialite-turned-socialist, Daisy Greville, Countess of Warwick, of 'Daisy, Daisy, Give me your answer do…' fame. Holst was organist and choirmaster at Thaxted's magnificent parish church, where Noel had introduced High Mass complete with 'bells and smells'. Noel was attempting at Thaxted to recreate the 'Merry England' he imagined had existed before the Reformation. The pageants, processions and morris dancing were all part of his vision, to which Holst contributed.
Ian Beckwith, *Wenlock*

The editor replies:
Sadly, there was not enough room in our Cotswold stroll to incorporate Holst's exploits in either London or Thaxted, though perhaps there is plenty of material here for a feature in the future?

Belfast memories

It was so good to read Clare Stevens's *Troubled Times* article about music in Belfast in the 1970s (March) and of her being in the audience for a concert by the King's Singers, of which I was then the founder bass. We sang at St Anne's Cathedral on several occasions during the Troubles and were always introduced to the audience by Sammy Crooks, the wonderful Dean. The last time we went he confessed he had nothing new to say about us but still came up with the following words of welcome, in that wonderful Irish brogue of his: 'It's a great pleasure to welcome back our old friends The King's Singers. I heard them rehearsing this afternoon and if they're no

better tonight you can get your money back on the way out.' Follow that!
***Brian Kay,** Fulbrook*

Anton's anti-climax

I have been struck by the negative comments Michael Tanner makes about Bruckner's music in his recent reviews. First, in your Christmas 2021 edition, when he was reviewing the Vienna Philharmonic recording with Christian Thielemann of the Fourth Symphony, the first thing he says is that it should be called 'The Pedantic' rather than 'The Romantic' Symphony! If he has such a negative view of the piece, why was he asked to review it? And then, in the January 2022 issue, when reviewing the new recording of the Seventh Symphony, he comments that the last two movements 'so often seem an anti-climax' after the *Adagio*. I've never heard that said, and I think all lovers of the Seventh would be astonished by such a statement.
***Guy Richardson,** Brighton*

The editor replies:
With regards to the Seventh Symphony, the point that Michael Tanner was making is that, in many performances, the last two movements can seem an anti-climax, not that those movements are anti-climactic *per se.*

Rightly pitched

During a recent *Building a Library* on Haydn's Symphony No. 49, 'La Passione', in Radio 3's *Record Review*, presenter Andrew McGregor remarked on the slightly lower pitch of Trevor Pinnock's recording with the English Concert by comparison with the other period instrument groups. Reviewer Simon Heighes replied that the pitch quoted in the booklet is A=421 (i.e. the A above middle C has a frequency of 421 Hz). He assumed this is doubtless for 'good scholarly reasons' but did not know what these are as they are not explained any further. The Viennese instrument maker Stein used a tuning fork which modern measurements show was A=421.6 and was probably the pitch used to tune Mozart's fortepianos and clavichords. This is also very likely the pitch of the instruments in nearby Eszterháza, where Haydn worked in the 1760s and even had to tune his own keyboard instrument!
***Philip Mitchell,** Winchester*

How to tune in?

I'm surprised that you never mention in your monthly Audio feature how to get the best possible sound quality from Radio 3. There are so many options now – FM, DAB, Freeview, Freesat and the internet. The BBC has mentioned 'HD Sound' on Radio 3, but I have not been able to find out how to access it; not from the BBC itself nor from manufacturers or dealers, although I understand that HD offers quality comparable to CDs. If I do get it on my iMac – I'm not sure about this – I only have the computer's speakers and amp and it's in a different room to the main stereo. I live in an area with very poor FM reception and the only choice on my hi-fi stereo is DAB, with its rather gritty sound. I've found a couple of receivers with internet, DAB and FM (Hama and Sangean Fusion 600) but I don't think they can access HD Sound. I'm sure there must be many other radio listeners who would like some information about this.
***Edwin Baker,** via email*

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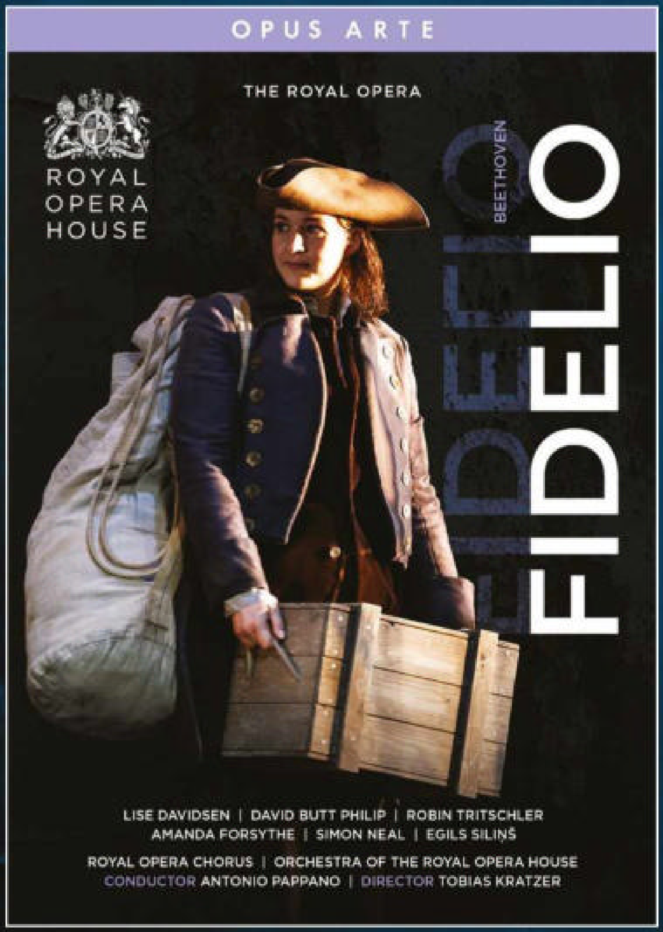

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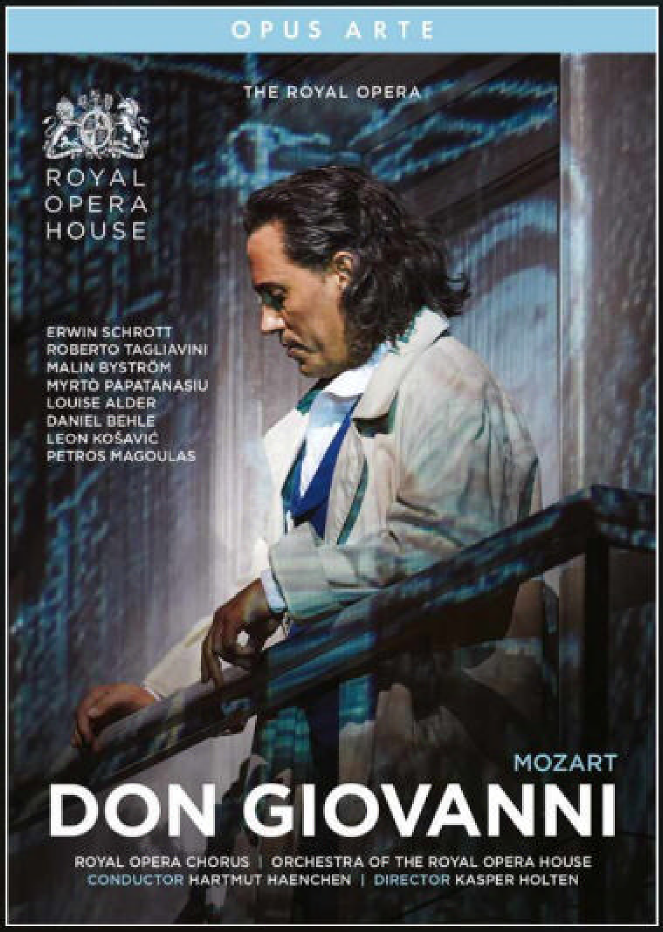
"(Lise) Davidsen, more than fulfilling the high expectations placed on her, makes a phenomenal Leonore."
The Guardian



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BBC music MAGAZINE

Ryan Wigglesworth makes BBC Scottish SO move

English conductor to take over at Glasgow-based orchestra after the BBC Proms

New music champion: Ryan Wigglesworth is a good fit with the BBC SSO

Six in the Scottish post

Recent BBC SSO conductors

Jerzy Maksymiuk (left) (Polish; *1983-93*)
Osmo Vänskä (Finnish; *1996-2002*)
Ilan Volkov (Israeli; *2003-09*)
Donald Runnicles (Scottish; *2009-16*)
Thomas Dausgaard (Danish; *2016 – present*)
Ryan Wigglesworth (English; *begins Sept 2022*)

The BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra has announced that Ryan Wigglesworth is to be its next chief conductor. He will begin in his new post in Glasgow in the autumn, taking over from current incumbent Thomas Dausgaard, who will be leading the ensemble through the summer and the BBC Proms season.

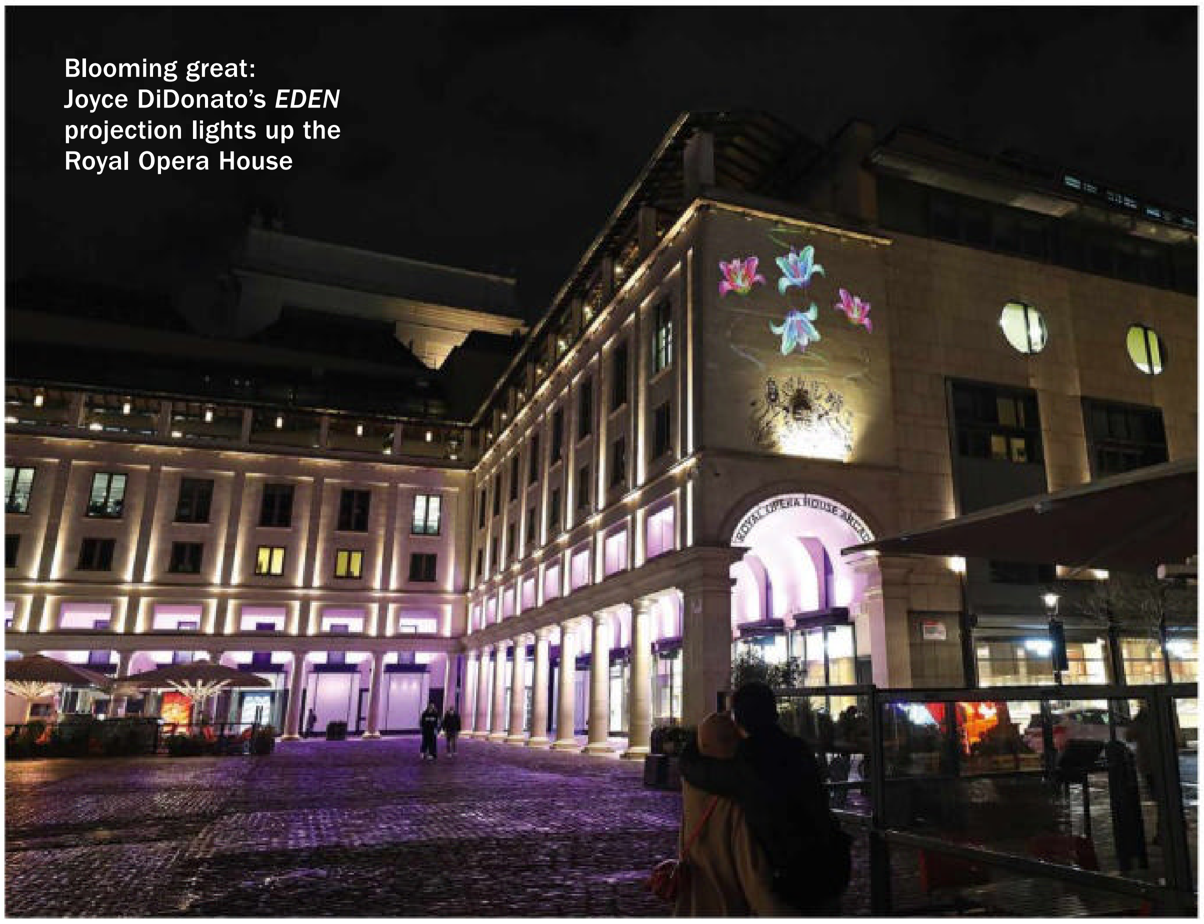
In appointing Wigglesworth, 42, the BBC SSO will in effect be getting three musicians for the price of one in that, as well as being a leading conductor, he is also an acclaimed pianist and composer – in fact, in May he will be performing two of those roles when he plays Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 12 with the orchestra before conducting it in Sibelius's Symphony No. 4. It will be by no means the first time he has collaborated with the BBC SSO, as he has conducted them on several occasions in both Glasgow and at the Aldeburgh Ferstival, and has recorded composers ranging from Mozart to Betsy Jolas with them for Radio 3 broadcasts. 'In Ryan, the BBC SSO has found a very special conductor,' says the orchestra's leader, Laura Samuel. 'His inclusive approach to every aspect of music making is refreshing and hugely inspiring for us all.'

> 'His inclusive approach to music making is refreshing and inspiring'

A former organ scholar of New College, Oxford, Wigglesworth was principal guest conductor of the Hallé Orchestra from 2015-18, and in 2019 founded the Knussen Chamber Orchestra (named after composer Oliver Knussen) which made its debut at the BBC Proms the same year. His position at the very heart of the contemporary music scene – his recording of Birtwistle's *Night's Black Bird* with the Hallé won the BBC Music Magazine Premiere Recording of the Year in 2012 – makes him the ideal fit for the BBC SSO, which has earned itself a glowing reputation as a commissioner and performer of new works, not least under former chief conductor Ilan Volkov, who founded and still runs the orchestra's Tectonics Festival at Glasgow's City Halls.

'I look forward to making this beautiful and vibrant city my musical home,' says Wigglesworth about his own move to Glasgow, 'and to connecting with all of our audiences across Scotland in the coming seasons.'

GETTY, BEN EALOVEGA



Blooming great: Joyce DiDonato's *EDEN* projection lights up the Royal Opera House

A bright moment as Covent Garden gets a floral touch

Joyce DiDonato said it with flowers on Valentine's Day, thanks to a stunning display on the wall of the Royal Opera House. Floral images, including vines creeping up the building, were projected onto the venue – where the US mezzo was appearing in Handel's *Theodora* – to highlight *EDEN*, her new recording of nature-related works by Wagner, Mahler, Copland and others. Passers-by were also handed packets of wildflower seeds. DiDonato is embarking on a 45-venue *EDEN* tour which will include visits to schools. 'Part of *EDEN*'s mission is to challenge everyone who encounters it to stop and observe the beauty that is present all around them,' she explains.

THE MONTH IN NUMBERS

7

… new operas were performed at St Pancras Station on 8 March to mark International Women's Day.

44

… years to end with Wagner's *Parsifal*, as David Greed, the leader of Orchestra of Opera North, has announced he will retire in June.

6

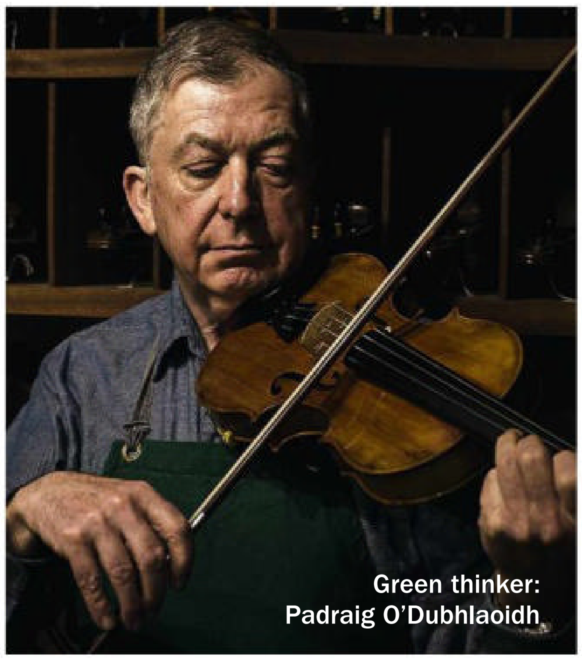
… new assistant conductors for the 2022/23 season have been announced by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

9

… years of playing the piano, described by Olympic freestyle skiing gold-medal winner Eileen Gu (below), 18, as the secret behind her success.

GETTY

SoundBites



Green thinker: Padraig O'Dubhlaoidh

Vegan strings

The first ever 100 per cent certified vegan violin has been unveiled by a violin-maker in Ireland. Padraig O'Dubhlaoidh says that he spent the pandemic developing an instrument that is made without animal glue, an adaptation that, he adds, not only makes it a more ethical option but is also good for the the instrument itself. 'Animal glues have harmful effects on violins,' he explains, 'inducing powerful tensions in wooden components.'

Royal viol

Jordi Savall, the eminent Spanish viol player, conductor and period instrument pioneer, has been made an honorary member of the Royal Philharmonic Society. Savall, who accepted the honour during a concert at Wigmore Hall, is in very prestigious company – beginning with Weber in 1826, other honorary members include Mendelssohn, Verdi, Clara Schumann, Yehudi Menuhin and Janet Baker.

Norwegian moves

Maybe one day Edward Gardner will also be an RPS honorary member? In the meantime, the in-demand English conductor has his eyes set on Oslo where, it has been announced, he will become music director of Norwegian Opera and Ballet in 2024. Gardner already has strong credentials in the Scandinavian country, as he has been principal conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra since 2015.

Coastal visit

The BBC Concert Orchestra, meanwhile, is heading for the seaside. The ensemble has announced a three-year residency in Great Yarmouth which, as well as giving regular concerts in the Norfolk town, will also mean working with local schools, collaborating with composers and producers and giving pop-up performances in public spaces.

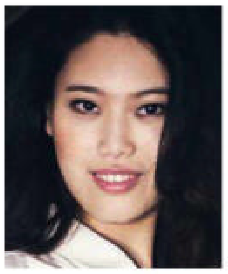
Rising Stars

Three to look out for...

John Holiday *Countertenor*

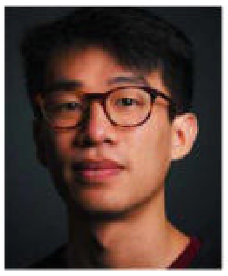
Born: Rosenberg, US
Career highlight: Being able to share music on NBC's *The Voice*. In my classical career, my highlights have involved bringing new opera to the world: Jonathan Dove's *Flight*, Daniel Bernard Roumain's *We Shall Not Be Moved*, Huang Ruo's *Paradise Interrupted* and Matthew Aucoin's *Eurydice*.
Musical hero: Derek Lee Ragin, the first African-American countertenor to grace the stage of the Metropolitan Opera. As with soprano Leontyne Price and mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves, there is an artistry and truth in his performances.
Dream concert: To have the John Holiday Experience at Madison Square Garden!

Siqian Li *Pianist*



Born: Chongqing, China
Career highlight: My debut recital outside of China at Église Notre-Dame d'Auvers, the church in Van Gogh's famous 1890 painting. I also performed a concerto in Kiev during the 2014 Revolution of Dignity, which made me understand the power of music.
Musical hero: My teachers: Hui-qiao Bao opened the door to a professional music career; Alexander Korsantia broadened my view of music as a performer; and Norma Fisher helped me explore classical music.
Dream concert: I dream of playing in nature, as cellist Yo-Yo Ma did with the works of Bach at the Grand Canyon.

Alex Ho *Composer*



Born: London, UK
Career highlight: Having my first (anti) opera *Untold* performed in 2019. I'm really excited that it will be produced by Muziektheater Transparant again in 2023 around Europe.
Musical hero: I always find inspiration in the music, collaboration and curation of Chinese composer Du Yun. I'd recommend listening to *Angel's Bone* and *Sweet Land* – you won't regret it.
Dream concert: I would love to write a double concerto for pipa and yangqin for the incredible Wu Man and Reylon Yount. Chinese instruments are epic and I wish more people in Western classical music knew about them.

TIMEPIECE This month in history

'A generous and polite nation': Handel brought *Messiah* to Ireland; (opposite) Fishamble Street in Dublin, where the work was premiered and is still sung annually today

GETTY, BEN TOMLIN

APRIL 1742

For unto Ireland, Handel's *Messiah* is born in Dublin

'Last Wednesday, the celebrated Dr Handell arrived here in the Packet-boat from Holyhead, a Gentleman universally known by his excellent Compositions in all kinds of Musick.' So ran a short news announcement in *The Dublin Journal*, days after Handel's disembarkment in the city on 18 November 1741.

What was Handel doing in Dublin, when for 30 years London had been his main centre of operations? It was possibly the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, who invited him. If so, it was a timely intervention: Handel's last three operas had failed, and he was at a low ebb both personally and professionally.

Two months before leaving London, Handel had completed *Messiah*, a new oratorio on the life of Christ and its theological significance. The author of its text, Charles Jennens, came up

to London in late November 1741, apparently to get an update from Handel on the *Messiah* project. 'But it was some mortification to me to hear that instead of performing it here he was gone into Ireland with it,' he wrote tetchily.

Messiah was not, however, the first piece Handel presented in Dublin. In a subscription series of 'Six Musical Entertainments' at the recently built 'New Musick Hall' in Fishamble Street, *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, *Acis and Galatea* and *Esther* were among the vocal works performed to great acclaim. A second series of six concerts in February 1742 was equally successful. At this point, Handel, riding a wave of acclamation from his Dublin audience, finally unpacked his score of *Messiah*. A charity premiere was mooted, 'for relief of the prisoners in the several gaols' of Dublin and for two hospitals. This occurred on 13 April 1742, at the same hall used for the subscription series.

The performance began at noon and was packed beyond the venue's normal capacity of 600. To squeeze an extra hundred in, women were asked 'to come without hoops' in their dresses and gentlemen 'without their swords'. Around 30 to 40 performers took part, most of the singers 'borrowed' from Dublin's St Patrick's and Christ Church cathedrals, and with strings, trumpets and timpani in the orchestra. Handel himself accompanied on an organ, perhaps his own imported from London.

Messiah's premiere that April afternoon was ecstatically received by 'the Lords Justices, and a vast Assembly of the Nobility and Gentry of both Sexes' who attended. 'Words are wanting to express the exquisite Delight it afforded' reported the *Dublin Journal*. The contralto Susannah Cibber's aria 'He was despised' drew particular attention from the Reverend Patrick Delaney– knowing Cibber had recently been entangled in an adulterous affair in London, he exclaimed, 'Woman, for this be all thy sins forgiven thee!'.

Financially, *Messiah* was also highly successful. Tickets were half a guinea each, and £400 in total (worth nearly £100,000 today) was raised for the three charities. A second performance was added on 3 June, this time for the composer's own benefit, and billed as 'the last Performance of Mr Handel's, during his stay in this Kingdom'.

To squeeze more in, women were asked 'to come without hoops' in their dresses

Handel left Ireland two months later, planning to return. He never did, but always retained fond memories of 'that generous and polite Nation'. The feeling is mutual: every 13 April since 1992, a choir has gathered on the spot where *Messiah* was first performed in Fishamble Street, to perform selections from his masterwork. The original 'New Musick Hall' eventually became an engineering works before being levelled for residential development. Only its archway remains standing today.

Terry Blain

Pole position: the Rotunda in Ranelagh Gardens

Also in April 1742

2nd: The Scottish physician **James Douglas** dies. One of the most eminent anatomists and obstetricians of his day, Douglas's admirers included the Pope. His research into the human body, in particular the peritoneum, was of major importance in surgical procedures and led to anatomical terms such as the 'Douglas pouch' and the 'Douglas line'.

4th: At the University Church of St Mary the Virgin in Oxford, the Methodist preacher **Charles Wesley** delivers his 'Awake Thou That Sleepest' sermon. In it, Wesley warns of those 'sleepers' who have become unaware that they need religious salvation, exhorts them to wake up to their present state and sets out the promises that can be made to those who do so. His brother, John, includes his words as one of the key sermons for Methodist preachers to use.

13th: The composer **Giovanni Veneziano** dies aged 59. Deputy conductor at the Santa Maria di Loreto Conservatory in Naples from 1716 onwards, Veneziano concentrated almost entirely on opera, and his *Lo 'mbruoglio de li nomme, Patrò Tonno d'Isca* and *Lo Pippo* were all premiered at the city's Teatro dei Fiorentini. At his death, he leaves a wife and eight children in a state of poverty.

22nd: London's **Ranelagh Gardens** opens three days per week for concerts and public breakfasts. At the centre of the gardens, admission to which is 12 pence, is a large rotunda heated by a central fireplace with an orchestra, organ and 52 candle-lit boxes around the walls where guests can take refreshments. Future visitors include the eight-year-old Mozart performing there in 1764.

25th: Elizabeth I of Russia crowns herself as Empress at the Dormition Cathedral in Moscow. The daughter of Peter I, 'The Great', she enjoys a successful 19-year reign, repairing the damage caused by her two disastrous predecessors. As well as proving a shrewd diplomatic operator abroad, she also improves living conditions at home and is a staunch supporter of the arts.

PENTATONE

Jeanine Tesori & Tazewell Thompson
Blue

Washington National Opera presents ***Blue***, a contemporary opera exploring race, loss, violence, and reconciliation in today's America, with a libretto by **Tazewell Thompson** set to music by **Jeanine Tesori**. Inspired by contemporary events and black literature, ***Blue*** centers on the hopes and fears of a young black couple in Harlem as they raise a son in 21st-century America. The piece is sung by an excellent cast of vocalists, including **Kenneth Kellogg** as The Father, **Briana Hunter** as The Mother, **Aaron Crouch** as The Son, and **Gordon Hawkins** as The Reverend, while **Washington National Opera Orchestra** is led by rising star conductor **Roderick Cox.**

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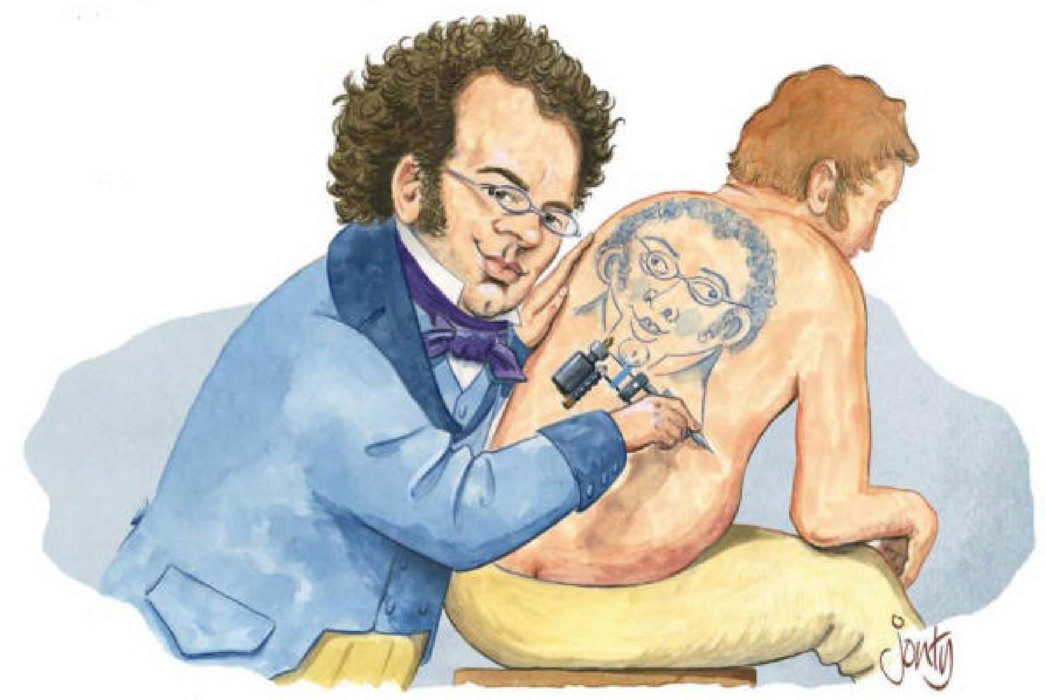
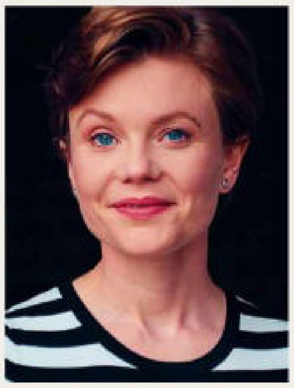


Tattoo survey gives us something to ink about

Did you know that Rihanna has inspired more tattoos than any other musician? Absolutely so, says a recent survey, which also tells us that, after the Bajan pop singer, Justin Bieber, Lady Gaga and Michael Jackson have appeared in ink on people's anatomies the most times. Pink Floyd and Queen are also popular, but disappointingly though not entirely surprisingly, classical music icons fail to make it anywhere near the top tattoos list. Perhaps then, *BBC Music* readers, we need to address that. Time to get Bach on your back, Brahms on your arms, Liszt on your wrist or even Schubert between your shoulders? Tattoo Bizet or not tattoo Bizet? That is the question.

DÉJÀ VU

History just keeps on repeating itself…



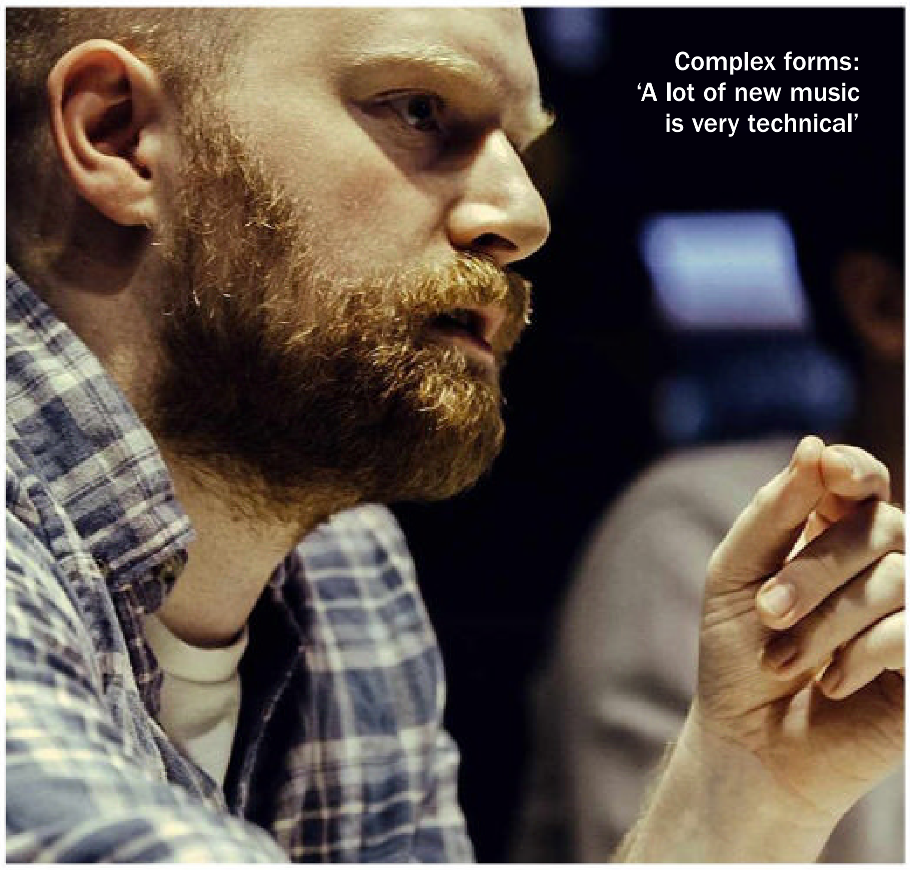
Some people are born simply too talented. In February, performances of Tama Matheson's play *Don Juan: The Brilliant Irreverence of Lord Byron* saw pianist Clare Hammond (left) perform works by Beethoven, Debussy and others in between playing three female roles on stage, earning praise for her 'fantastic' acting skills from Matheson himself. She is not the first classical musician to have trod the boards with aplomb…

In 1927, the pianist, conductor and composer **Oscar Levant** added 'actor' to his CV when he played, aptly, the songwriter in Watters and Hopkins's *Burlesque* – a play whose Broadway run notched up 372 shows. A close contemporary of Levant's, the great American bass-baritone **Paul Robeson** was a familiar figure in the theatre, not least when he earned acclaim as Shakespeare's Othello – opposite Peggy Ashcroft – at the West End in 1930 and, years later, on Broadway and across the US. It was that same title role that brought bass-baritone **Willard White** to the attention of theatre lovers when he appeared in Trevor Nunn's 1990 production for the Royal Shakespeare Company, which was also released on film soon after. A whole host of opera singers, meanwhile, revealed their thespian skills last year, when The Grange Festival staged the bard's *King Lear* – among the cast were bass **John Tomlinson** as Lear himself, plus sopranos **Susan Bullock** and **Emma Bell** as Goneril and Regan, alongside soprano **Louise Alder** (Cordelia), tenor **Kim Begley** (The Fool) and baritone **Thomas Allen** (Gloucester).

NICK WEST, PHILIP GATWARD ILLUSTRATION: JONTY CLARK

MEET THE COMPOSER

Daniel Elms



Complex forms: 'A lot of new music is very technical'

Electroacoustic composer Daniel Elms caught attention in 2019 with his debut album, *Islandia*. He has worked on film, theatre and video game scores with the likes of Max Richter. Created with choreographer Alexander Whitley, his *The Age of Spiritual Machines* will feature in the Manchester Collective's Neon tour this May.

'Post-genre' is often a term that's used for music like mine. It sounds pretentious, but it refers to music that comes from a classical tradition but has been changed by the influence of other genres. A lot of new music is very technical, but you don't need to be informed to appreciate it. Everyone is creating their own toolkits every time they write a new work, so you're never going to understand everything about it on a deep level.

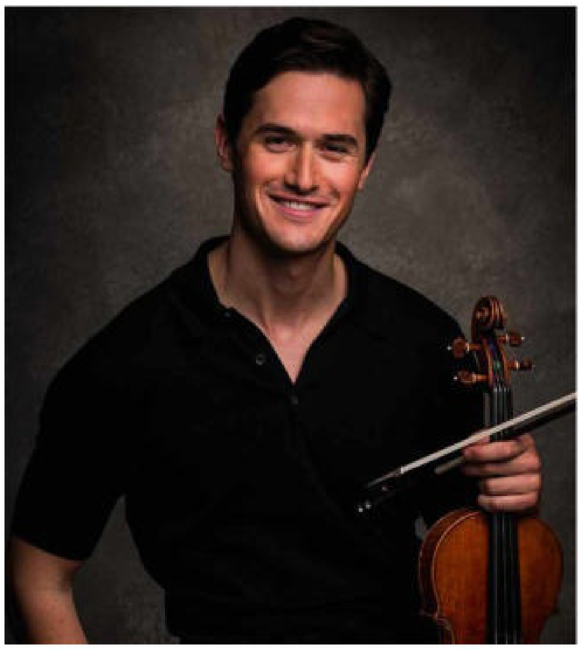
I'm always looking at how to augment an orchestral colour palette with technology. My music explores timbre and colour, using synthesizers as a legitimate voice. It's quite soundscape-oriented, so the listener can take time to explore the breadth of moods and colours.

Writing *The Age of Spiritual Machines* was the first time I'd worked with dancers and choreography. I sat down with Alexander Whitley, who also uses a lot of technology in his practices. While I use synthesizers and field recordings, he uses projection mapping and motion-capture suits.

We looked at a cultural movement called 'transhumanism'. It's about people trying to improve themselves with technology. It started as a sci-fi idea, but now it's a reality: we all have search engines in our pockets. I sent violins through processing units to create different sounds, then stripped those synthesized elements out and re-orchestrated the piece using the harmonies and textures those processes made. We wanted to show what's left in the human form after we've been altered by technology.

There are two parts of my compositional process. The first involves thinking and theorising, consciously processing thoughts and ideas. That can take months. Then it's just a case of piecing it all together. There's a strange catharsis in using field recording and synthesizers, because it's just you and the machine. The only dialogue you have with the technology is music.

Studio Secrets



Signum double: Charlie Siem has two projects

We reveal who's recording what and where...

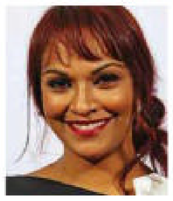
Violinist ***Charlie Siem*** has just put the finishing touches on a new recording of Beethoven's Violin Concerto and Romance with the Philharmonia and conductor Oleg Caetani. Due in August on Signum Classics, it comes ahead of a further recording at Saffron Hall – of sonatas by Vaughan Williams and Grieg – which Signum has on its release roster for February next year.

More Vaughan Williams was in the can at St Jude's, Hampstead, recently as baritone ***Roderick Williams*** joined the London Choral Sinfonia and conductor Michael Waldron for a recording of mainly English song items. It also includes *The Lark Ascending*, recorded by violinist Elena Urioste, and is set for release by Orchid Classics in June.

Avie Records celebrates its 20th anniversary this year with recordings by both regular artists and some new appointments. The ***New York Youth Symphony*** made its debut recording in the midst of pandemic restrictions in the Big Apple, with separate sessions taking place for each section of the ensemble. Its album of music by Florence Price, Jessie Montgomery and Valerie Coleman is out on 8 April.

Also out on 8 April is the first recording in a new partnership announced by the ***Czech Philharmonic*** and Pentatone Music. The digital release of Mahler's Fourth Symphony features the orchestra and soprano Chen Reiss, conducted by Semyon Bychkov. Pentatone will co-produce and release all future recordings by the ensemble.

Henry Wood Hall braced itself for a 90-strong London Symphony Orchestra recently as the ensemble recorded an album of orchestral works by American composer ***Peter Boyer***. Naxos will release the results, which include the works *Balance of Power* and *Fanfare for Tomorrow*, in August as part of its 'American Classics' series.



REWIND

Great artists talk about their past recordings

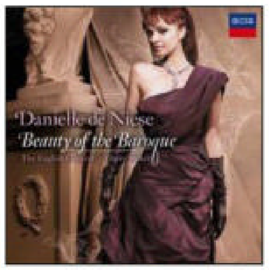
This month: DANIELLE DE NIESE *Soprano*

MY FINEST MOMENT

JS Bach *Cantata, BWV 208 – 'Schafe können sicher weiden'*

Danielle de Niese (soprano); The English Concert/Harry Bicket

Decca 478 2260 (2011)



I remember hearing the first edit of the *Beauty of the Baroque* album, particularly this one track. I was in New York with my parents and we were sitting around the kitchen table. I was loving all the tracks, really – I loved all of the collaborations as I was performing with some of my favourite people in the world. But I got to this track and when I heard it I almost didn't think it was me! It was so beautiful. I had worked very hard on it, but hearing that first edit made me burst into tears, mainly because I couldn't believe it was me. I thought perhaps I was a good singer after all, because I was enjoying it, which never happens. I was very overwhelmed, and my parents looked very proudly at me, as if to say, 'How could you have ever not thought that until now?!'

The piece is quite special to me, too, because I listened to it a million times when I was about eight years old. So it acts like a marker for a part of my life –

Beauty of the Baroque: Danielle de Niese's Bach recording finally convinced her of her own talent

the very early dream of being a singer – and in that instant it was like a trigger, bringing back all those memories. It was a very proud moment.

MY FONDEST MEMORY

Mozart *Il re pastore – 'L'amerò, sarò costante'*
Danielle de Niese (soprano); OAE/Charles Mackerras
Decca 478 1511 (2009)

Charles Mackerras was wonderful – a fellow Australian, so we got on incredibly well. *The Mozart Album* was one of the last albums he did before he died. I thought he'd surely say no to doing it, but I took a punt and asked him. If he had said no I would have accepted that because he was Charles Mackerras! But he said yes and we had so much fun. We were rehearsing at Kings Place and we got to this cadenza in 'L'amerò, sarò costante', which was actually going to bleed into the reprise of the main theme. He stopped the orchestra and said, 'Danielle, you know I think you're wonderful and everything, but I'm not sure that you can do that all in one breath!' I asked if I could give it a try and I remember the concertmaster just looked at me with this knowing look, like 'Good luck…' I took the deepest breath and I did it. You might think that could have been really off-putting for me, but I didn't feel that at all. When you deeply respect and esteem somebody, you can take critique from them.

He was such a colourful person, in addition to being a completely vivid maestro. He used to always carry this little vial of goat's milk with him – just enough milk for his tea.

I'D LIKE ANOTHER GO AT…

Handel *Semele*
Danielle de Niese (soprano) et al; Opera Fuoco/David Stern
Pierre Varany PV704021/22 (2004)

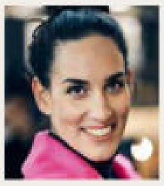
I'm always looking for how I should improve – I take lots of notes and I write down all the ones I'm given by directors, conductors and my mum! There are some things I would love to re-record because they were just such fun. For example, before my recording contract with Decca, I did *Semele* with David Stern (Isaac Stern's son). It's one of my favourite pieces and we had such a blast making it.

I could look at every one of my recordings and hear things I should improve on or think if I sang it now it would sound different, or better. If I did record *Semele* again, I think the sound of my voice would have massively changed. I'd probably look to recapture some of the ebullience that I had in the early recording, and I would try to remember to fling myself with abandon, the way that I did in 2004. So it might not necessarily be that I'd want to do it over in order to discard things from that first recording, because I love it, but I think I would try to make sure that I bring it in line with the much more seasoned artist that I am today.

Danielle de Niese performs at the London Handel Festival on Sunday 27 March

GETTY, CHRIS DUNLOP, CLIFF LIPSON, BERNADETTE OZ

Buried Treasure

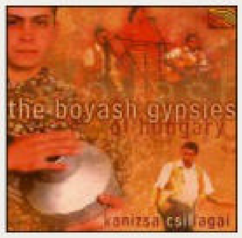


Flautist ***Noemi Gyori*** introduces us to a selection of her most treasured recordings

Weinberg Symphony No. 21
CBSO/Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla
Deutsche Grammophon 483 6566

I performed Weinberg at a festival in Munich, so was really interested in getting to know his music. This is a very long piece, dedicated to his parents and sisters – I come from a Jewish family, so there are personal links as well. What particularly struck me about this recording is that Mirga found the necessary colour the music requires, without distracting from the depth of it. It made a great impression on me.

The Boyash Gypsies of Hungary
The Boyash Gypsies
ARC Music EUCD 1670



I come from Hungary and there's a great palette of different types of music, including a very rich culture of folk and Romany ethnic music. The Boyash are a small group of Gypsies living in Romania and southern Hungary, and this disc has so many songs that are earworms. There's a lot of improvisation, a lot of guitar, percussion, singing and whistling. It changes character very quickly and I love that.

Schubert in Memoriam Sviatoslav Richter
Elisso Wirssaladze (piano)
Live Classics LCL 381

The sound of a musician tells so much about their personality and their relationship to the instrument and composer. I think Georgian pianism is very distinctive, with a certain warmth and depth that I find very meaningful. This rare live recording was made in 1998, when Elisso was in her fifties, and it's just one extraordinary performance after the next. She has a special relationship to the music, but for me it's less about what she's playing and more about the textures she presents.

Noemi Gyori and Gergely Madaras's new album of works by the Doppler brothers is out on 22 April on Rubicon Classics.

THE LISTENING SERVICE

In praise of the recorder

It's time to put aside those painful memories of school music classes, says **Tom Service**, and welcome the renaissance of this often derided wind instrument

ILLUSTRATION: MARIA CORTE MAIDAGAN

The recorder: the first and last instrument that millions of schoolchildren all over the world ever play, producing sounds of screechingly overblown noisiness: it's no surprise that the recorder is still associated with the ends of so many promising musical careers.

So what is truly surprising is that, today, the recorder is the sound of cool. The instrument is the definitive soundworld of two of the most popular streaming series of the last couple of years. The galaxy far, far away of Disney's *The Mandalorian* is conjured by the sounds of recorders: the composer Ludwig Göransson creates a recorder-festooned theme tune for a *Star Wars* spin-off story that's centred on saving The Child, the baby-Yoda lookalike Grogu. And in Netflix's *Squid Game*, Jung Jae-il's music uses recorders to make sounds of warped folksy innocence, a musical realisation of *Squid Game*'s murderously adult versions of children's games.

The recorder's current coolness is a return to its rightful place in our musical lives. In its earlier heyday, it was a pinnacle of royal status: Henry VIII had 76 recorders in his collection, he played at least one of them 'dailie', and in 1539 he employed the five Bassano brothers, a recorder consort from Venice. And the sound that recorders made was heard as sensually beautiful. Samuel Pepys, writing in 1668, said the recorder's sounds was 'so sweet that it ravished me; and indeed, in a word, did wrap up my soul so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife'.

After volumes of consort music and a flurry of Baroque concertos, the recorder's disappearance from the mainstream of music history in the 18th and 19th centuries has, in fact,

In 1668, Samuel Pepys said the recorder's sound was 'so sweet that it ravished me'

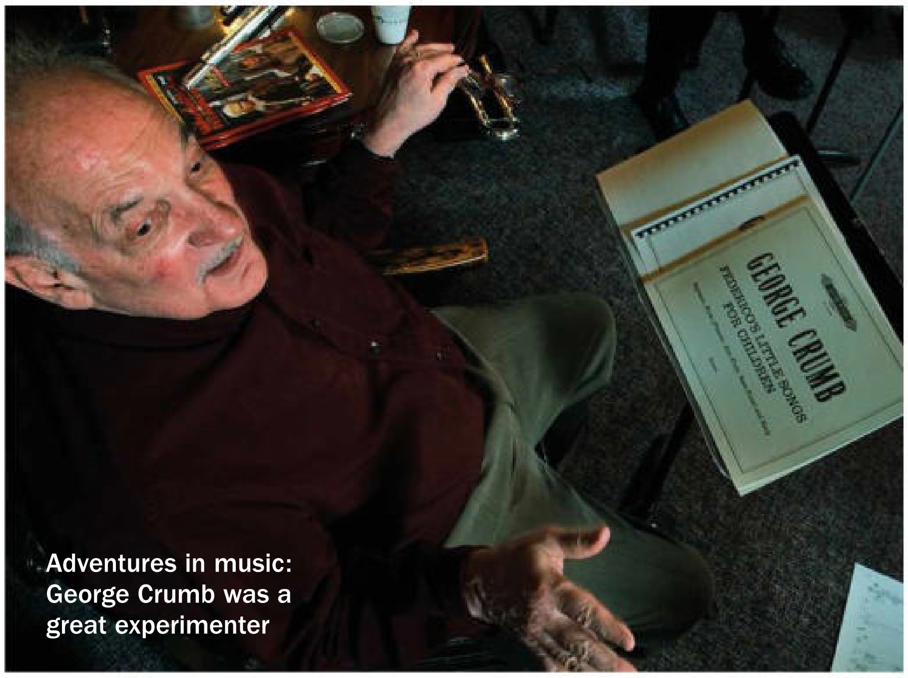
been the reason for its resurgence in our time. That historical gap has allowed performers, composers and instrument builders to return to its possibilities with history-traversing creativity in the 20th and 21st centuries: from early music pioneers such as Frans Brüggen in Holland, for whom Louis Andriessen wrote one of the classics of the avant-garde recorder repertoire, *Sweet*; to the creators of the sci-fi instrumentarium of Paetzold recorders – a family of recorders that look like extras from *Star Wars*, and which produce a range of sounds that goes as deep as the double bass; to today's virtuosos like Lucie Horsch, whose brilliance takes in the whole panoply of the recorder universe, from the tiny, piping *garklein* to the lowering sub-contrabass.

In today's classrooms, you're as likely to hear a jumbled twangling of massed ukuleles as the school instrument of choice, just at the very moment when the recorder is essential again, from concert halls to soundtracks. That's a shame: let classrooms go into the galaxies of musical and historical possibility that belong only to the recorder!

BBC RADIO 3 90–93FM

Tom Service explores how music works in *The Listening Service* on Sundays at 5pm

FAREWELL TO...

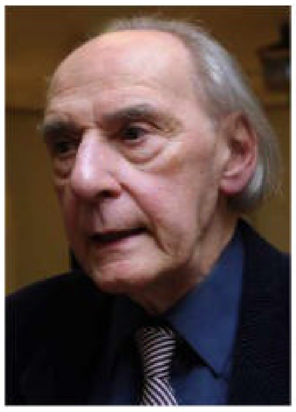


Adventures in music: George Crumb was a great experimenter

George Crumb Born 1929 *Composer*

Crumb's gentle, even shy, exterior belied his tenacity as a composer. His adventures in music really were just that, as Crumb revealed himself to be one of American music's great experimenters. Works such as *Black Angels, Star Child*, *Vox Balaenae* and the *Makrokosmos* series pushed the envelope in terms of the sounds musicians were permitted to make on the concert stage. Born in West Virginia into a musical family – both parents were musicians – Crumb latched onto composing as a teenager and studied at Charleston's St Mason College, among other institutions. He found himself studying with Boris Blacher in Berlin thanks to a scholarship and returned to the US primed to take on his other great love, teaching. His longest tenure was at the University of Pennsylvania, where he taught for over three decades. Students nurtured by him include composers Jennifer Higdon, Christopher Rouse and Osvaldo Golijov. He composed right till the end, putting the finishing touches to his final work in 2021.

Joseph Horovitz Born 1926 *Composer, Conductor*



One of the great all-rounders, Horovitz was as at home composing chamber music as he was a television theme tune. Stage and screen were never far away during the Vienna-born composer's career – he composed some 16 ballet scores and a clutch of small-screen tunes, among many other things. Hitler's tightening grip on Austria led the Horovitz family to England, specifically Oxford, and it was at New College, Oxford where Joseph began musical studies. He moved on to the Royal College of Music in London and followed that with a year in Paris to study under Nadia Boulanger. Conducting was also a draw, and Horovitz secured the position of music director at Bristol Old Vic, his first professional role, in 1950. He would later conduct ballet and opera at houses around the world, including the Royal Opera House. Away from the stage, he taught at the RCM and composed chamber works and concertos, not to mention the 1970 'pop cantata' *Captain Noah and His Floating Zoo*.

Also remembered...

Leslie Parnas (*born 1931*) was an American cellist who won silver at the 1962 Tchaikovsky Competition and went on to become one of the country's most eminent musicians and recording artists.

William Kraft (*born 1923*) was an American composer, conductor, percussionist and teacher who was the long-time principal timpanist of the LA Philharmonic and a key figure in the city's musical life.

GETTY, BRIDGEMAN

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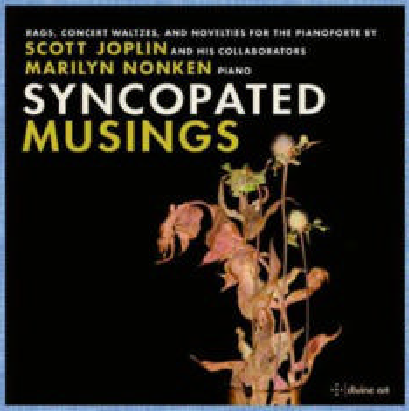

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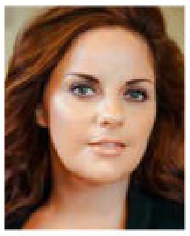
A classic cut: Dover Quartet excel in playing Barber's Adagio

Music to my ears

What the classical world has been listening to this month

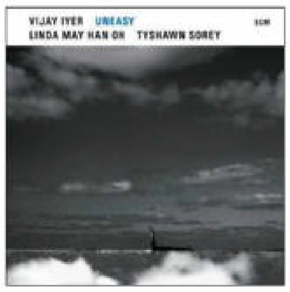
Celine Byrne Soprano



I've been listening a lot to the soundtrack of **Les Misérables**, which I'm going to see with my daughter in Dublin. I hate the phrase 'rollercoaster of emotions', but that is exactly what it is! I was into musicals long before I even knew what opera was and went to see *Les Mis* both in the West End and on Broadway, drawn at first by the fact that it had an Irish star – the amazing Colm Wilkinson, who played the original Jean Valjean and then the priest in the 2012 movie.

The day after *Les Misérables*, I'm going to a concert that includes **Mendelssohn**'s *Hebrides Overture*, which my son has been studying at school. It's wonderful for children to be able to feel the music come alive on stage and conjure up in their own minds the depiction of the landscape that the composer intended. The concert is being conducted by Sergio Alapont, who is wonderful. He conducted me in *La bohème*, and I'll be fascinated to see him conducting a symphony.

CRITIC'S CHOICE



Helen Wallace

I've been listening to **Vijay Iyer, Tyshawn Sorey** and **Linda May Han Oh**'s new album *Uneasy* (ECM): three of America's most accomplished and curious jazz musicians, collaborating with an astonishing level of mercurial fluency which produces a molten dance of ideas and sounds like they are having a ball. It's a wild ride, but you're travelling in a Ferrari.

> 'It's wonderful for children to be able to feel the music come alive on stage'

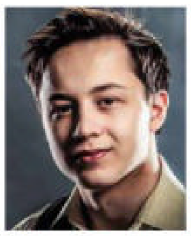
I adore **The Smashing Pumpkins**. I fell in love with their *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* when I was younger and it is still my go-to album – I have it on both CD and vinyl! Just as, when I sing Mimì in Puccini's *La bohème* and I identify completely with her, everything on this album is so relatable to me. It has everything from gentle ballads to heavy metal, but my favourite song is 'Tonight Tonight' which has an orchestral arrangement that always gives me such a buzz.

And also...

I'm one of those people who fell into **baking** during the pandemic, as I had so much time on my hands. What I love about it is that, unlike normal cooking, when people are eating a cake they always get so enthusiastic about it and are so grateful. I almost feel like I should get a medal or something! I don't do banana bread as it's a bit boring, but would say that, above all, I am especially good at carrot cake.

Celine Byrne sings Mimì on Irish National Opera's new recording of Puccini's La bohème, released by Signum this month

Johan Dalene Violinist



I've always admired the sound of the Dover Quartet and was really pleased to meet them a few years ago and discover they're lovely people as well as being an extraordinary ensemble. Their recording of **Barber**'s *Adagio for Strings* is a classic. I've played his Violin Concerto a lot but I've not really dug into the rest of his repertoire enough.

Because classical music is what I am all about, I tend to think and analyse it a lot when I'm listening to it for pleasure. It's easier for me to relax when I'm listening to a style or genre I know very little about. **Kendrick Lamar**'s 2015 album *To Pimp a Butterfly* is something I often turn to when I'm running or walking. It's very different to other rap albums – he's a poet and this sense of poetry runs through the whole album. It's really refreshing and imaginative.

I've learnt from my violin teacher Per Enoksson since I was about ten and have always looked up to him. He's now a concertmaster of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, but there's an old recording of

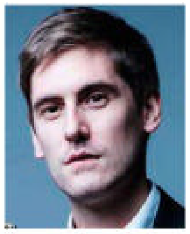
him playing the **Brahms** sonatas which is utterly captivating. His musicianship is something I always strive for, and you can really hear it in these recordings.

And also...

I go through condensed periods of reading, but then won't pick up a book for ages. At the moment, I'm really enjoying **Barack Obama**'s memoir, *A Promised Land*, which is all about his life, his time in office and the difficult decisions he had to make along the way. I don't know much about politics, but he's such a good storyteller. Plus, he's just a really cool person.

Johan Delane's recording of Sibelius and Nielsen's violin concertos with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra is out on BIS this month

Jonathan Radford Saxophonist



The violinist **James Ehnes** is a musician who I really respect. I just love listening to his playing. I always feel like there's so much class in what he does; he has everything. There's power and intimacy, it's full of musical integrity, so virtuosic, intensely expressive and lyrical, and it always seems so fresh and spontaneous. I've been listening to his Korngold recording a lot lately, and the way that he plays his music is incredible.

I didn't know about the composer **Ruth Gipps** before her centenary last year, and I listen to her music more and more. I started with a recording of chamber works and then I listened to more of her orchestral pieces – there's a great recording by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Rumon Gamba on Chandos. She said at one point, 'I'll be famous after I'm dead,' and I think we're seeing that; she's becoming something amazing.

Rudy Wiedoeft was known as 'the Kreisler of the saxophone' and was hugely virtuosic and prolific. He was a composer, teacher and performer, played everywhere and made lots of recordings. One was by the Frisco 'Jass' Band, and it was one of the very first records marketed as being jazz. But he wasn't really a jazz musician, and that's maybe one of the reasons why he was forgotten, because we couldn't pigeonhole him. He's been a massive inspiration to me.

And also...

I grew up up in the countryside in a small village in Suffolk, and I have since lived in Manchester, Paris and now London. I've always got this memory of being surrounded by space and the outdoors, so that's something I enjoy rediscovering from time to time. The most recent visit to somewhere far from the city was to **Durdle Door**, the limestone arch on the Jurassic Coast, which was amazing. When you show the photos to people they can't believe it's in England. It's such a magical place.

Jonathan Radford's debut album 'The Saxophone Craze: Homage to Rudy Wiedoeft' is out on Champs Hill on 8 April

Inspirational: sax player Rudy Wiedoeft

CRITIC'S CHOICE

Malcolm Hayes

A composer can get pigeonholed for a single work, like **Rodrigo**'s much-loved *Concierto de Aranjuez*. Meanwhile, I've been happily exploring further in the Spanish composer's large and widely recorded output (thank you, Naxos and Brilliant Classics). There's the poignancy, rapture and sense of fun of *Tríptic de Mossèn Cinto*, an exquisite orchestral song-cycle set in Catalan. And there are surprises everywhere: the choral and orchestral *Hymns of the Neophytes of Qumrán* sound like a cross between Falla and Messiaen.

Our Choices The *BBC Music Magazine* team's current favourites

Charlotte Smith *Editor*

I'm ashamed to say that before this month I had failed to familiarise myself fully with the very fine playing of the late ***Rinat Ibragimov***, former principal double bassist of the London Symphony Orchestra. The LSO has shared several videos of him as soloist on YouTube, all of them featuring impeccably warm, fluid and uninhibited playing. His interpretation of Bach's Third Cello Suite is a joy – a kaleidoscope of shading and tonal colours.

Jeremy Pound *Deputy editor*

It was 25 years ago this month that, within three days of starting as editorial assistant of *Classic CD* magazine, I was packed off to Paris to interview the flautist ***Emmanuel Pahud***. My first ever interviewee proved an absolute gent and the disc I was there to ask him about – Mozart's Flute Concertos with the Berlin Philharmonic – is still one of my favourites. There's no room for sludgy sentimentality here, as nippy tempos and a light touch throughout give everything a wonderful springlike feel.

Alice Pearson *Cover CD editor*

As February marked the 230th anniversary of ***Rossini***'s birth – he was born on the 29th! – I've been enjoying listening to his *Petite messe solennelle*, in an intimate recording by Ottavio Dantone and the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris. Written some time after his operas, the work was prompted by a friend's death and, although still joyous and energetic, it also shows another side of the composer's character with its dark undertones and sense of sorrow.

Michael Beek *Reviews editor*

I've become a little bit obsessed with ***Brett Mitchell***'s (pictured right) YouTube channel. The American conductor, and artistic director of the Sunriver Music Festival in Oregon, is also a very fine composer, arranger and pianist. It's the latter two talents he shares most with us subscribers, and for a John Williams fan like me, it's also a bounty of brilliant solo piano interpretations of my favourite film music.

Freya Parr *Digital editor, staff writer*

While any Oscar nomination is undoubtedly a good thing, I believe there was a mix-up at this year's Academy Awards and ***Jonny Greenwood*** was nominated for the wrong film. Sure, *The Power of the Dog* is great, but how did *Spencer* go without so much as an honourable mention? Blending free jazz within Baroque structures and instrumentation, it perfectly mirrors the on-screen action with Diana's desperate attempts to live as a free spirit within rigid structures.

ROY COX, TÁINE KING, MATS BÄCKER, PETER LOCKLEY

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Richard Morrison

Performers shouldn't wait until their encore to share something personal

I never hear an encore in a concert hall without thinking of *Oliver Twist*. 'Please, sir, I want some more,' the boy cried – 'desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery', as Dickens put it. Elsewhere in this issue we report that Daniel Barenboim has just recorded a whole album of encores. Presumably his legion of fans don't feel reckless with misery, but are they desperate with hunger for more charming ivory-ticklers from a performer who has already recorded umpteen albums of all conceivable repertoire?

In fact, how often is an audience really hungry to hear more from a soloist who has already entertained them for a whole recital or a concerto? Or has the ritual of an encore just become another of those stale conventions baked into attending a classical concert?

Just once in 50 years of concert-going have I heard an encore so thrilling, so life-enhancing, that the entire audience rose to acclaim it – not when it had finished, but while it was still going on. It was the summer of 1987, and Vladimir Horowitz (who hadn't played in public for several years) was on a farewell tour of Europe. I had interviewed him a few days before his Royal Festival Hall concert and was frankly sceptical about the project. To be blunt, the Russian virtuoso, then 84, seemed senile.

Well, how wrong can you be? I don't know what they slipped into his tea, but his London recital was phenomenal. It was as if the decades had rolled back and those famous flat fingers were racing round the keys like it was 1928.

Then he played the first of several encores - Chopin's 'Heroic' Polonaise in A flat. When he reached the pulsating E major middle section, and his left hand started pumping out that descending ostinato in octaves at breakneck speed, an astonishing thing happened. One by one, then row by row, people started to rise to their feet. Some even lifted their hands, as if transfixed by some celestial power. Long before Horowitz had played the final notes, a vast roar from the crowd drowned out the piano.

Perhaps being there spoilt me, because most encores I have heard since then strike me as routine, or even perfunctory. Sometimes without bothering even to announce what the music is, the soloist wheels out a piece that – surprise, surprise – is featured on his or her latest album. And the poor old orchestra has to sit there silent and bored, though with their faces carefully radiating polite interest.

> Encores allow soloists to reveal more of their characters and their special passions

Thank heavens that some younger soloists – the ones that dare to be different and are therefore usually labelled as 'mavericks' – have started to rethink the whole nature of encores. At the BBC Proms a few years ago, Pekka Kuusisto set the trend. After a performance of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto he launched into a spirited rendition of a Finnish folksong ('dating from the days when Russia was part of Greater Finland,' he quipped). What's more, he got the orchestra and audience playing and clapping as well. At the Proms last year, Patricia Kopatchinskaja went even further. Instead of waiting till 'encore time' to play some folk music, she inserted it before and during her performance of Bartók's Violin Concerto No. 2, thus revealing the inspiration behind the concerto.

That made me think. When encores work, they work for three reasons. First, they ambush the audience. Secondly, they give the performer the opportunity to speak, and thus establish a different sort of bridge to the listeners. And thirdly, they reveal an unexpected facet of the performer's musicality or personality.

But performers could do all of that during a concert if they were bold enough. They don't have to wait for 'encore time'. They could speak to their audiences, pointing out what to listen to in pieces, or explaining why they are specially attracted to this music. And they could surprise the public with unscheduled additions, just as Kopatchinskaja did.

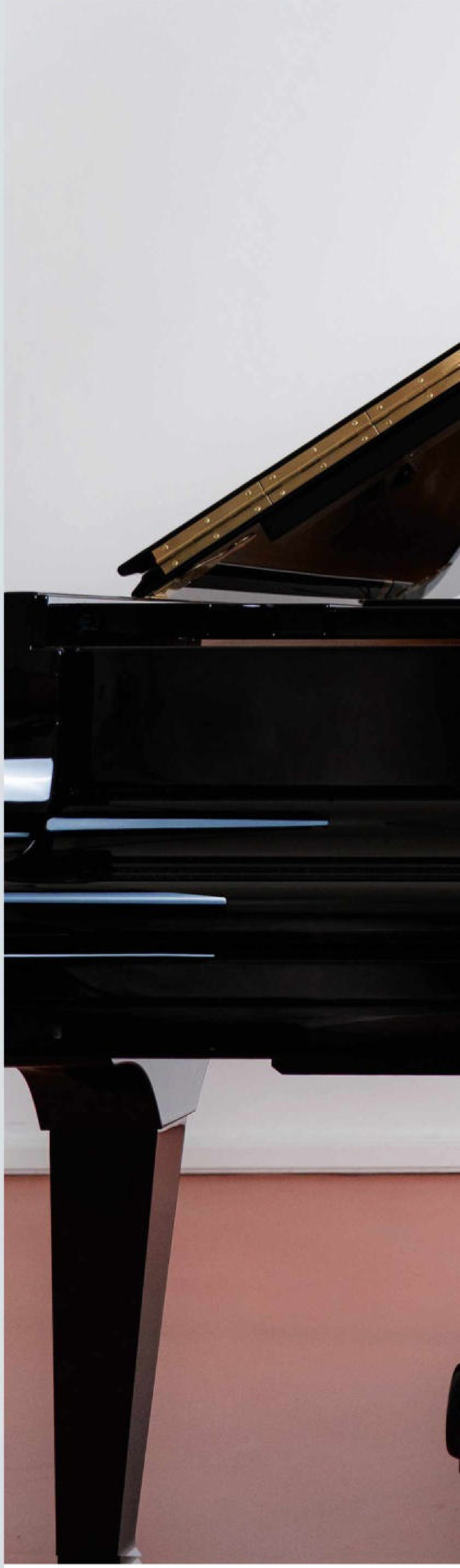
Not only would that bring more of a sense of spontaneity into classical music – something that might attract younger people accustomed to the casual atmosphere of rock gigs. It would also allow soloists to reveal more of their characters and their special passions than is possible within the corseted confines of a normal concert programme.

Wouldn't you love to see that sense of adventure in our concert halls? Not all the time, but much more regularly. It would be a breath of fresh air. In fact, you might even find me shouting 'encore!'.

Richard Morrison is chief music critic and a columnist of The Times

Breaking down barriers

As Daniel Barenboim prepares to mark his 80th birthday later this year, the eminent pianist and conductor tells Jessica Duchen about his new recording, performing through the pandemic and his mission in our troubled times to bring people together through music



Somewhere in my earliest musical memories, a black-and-white TV presents a sliver of sonic heaven, as a stocky young pianist with blazing eyes and a forest of dusky curls plays Mozart. Over the years, that figure – Daniel Barenboim – has remained a still point in a turning musical world. He started at the top and, as both pianist and conductor, he stayed there. Now that he is turning 80, there's no point asking 'Maestro' (as he is usually called) if he is planning retirement. It's unthinkable.

HARALD HOFFMANN, GETTY

Speaking to me from his office in Berlin, Barenboim is as direct as ever. He has always been a person who says what he means and means what he says, articulating his ideas with exceptional clarity and a certain amount of punch. Now he is characteristically upfront about how the Covid pandemic has been for him.

'When the pandemic started, I was quite quiet about it,' he says. 'I used the time to practise things I hadn't played for a long time. But later I became less and less quiet. I think the pandemic is not only horrific in itself. It also brings with it a kind of general depression for all human beings, a lack of normality that I find very disturbing. I can't wait for it to go away.'

Whether it will affect orchestral touring long-term, he says, is not clear. Earlier this year, of eight concerts in Germany and France he was due to give with his

A master of the stage: whether live, or as a young performer on TV (far left), Barenboim has inspired generations of musicians

Berlin Staatskapelle, only three took place. 'It's understandable, but the financial difficulties, the inability to travel normally, all the paperwork – it really makes life very complex.'

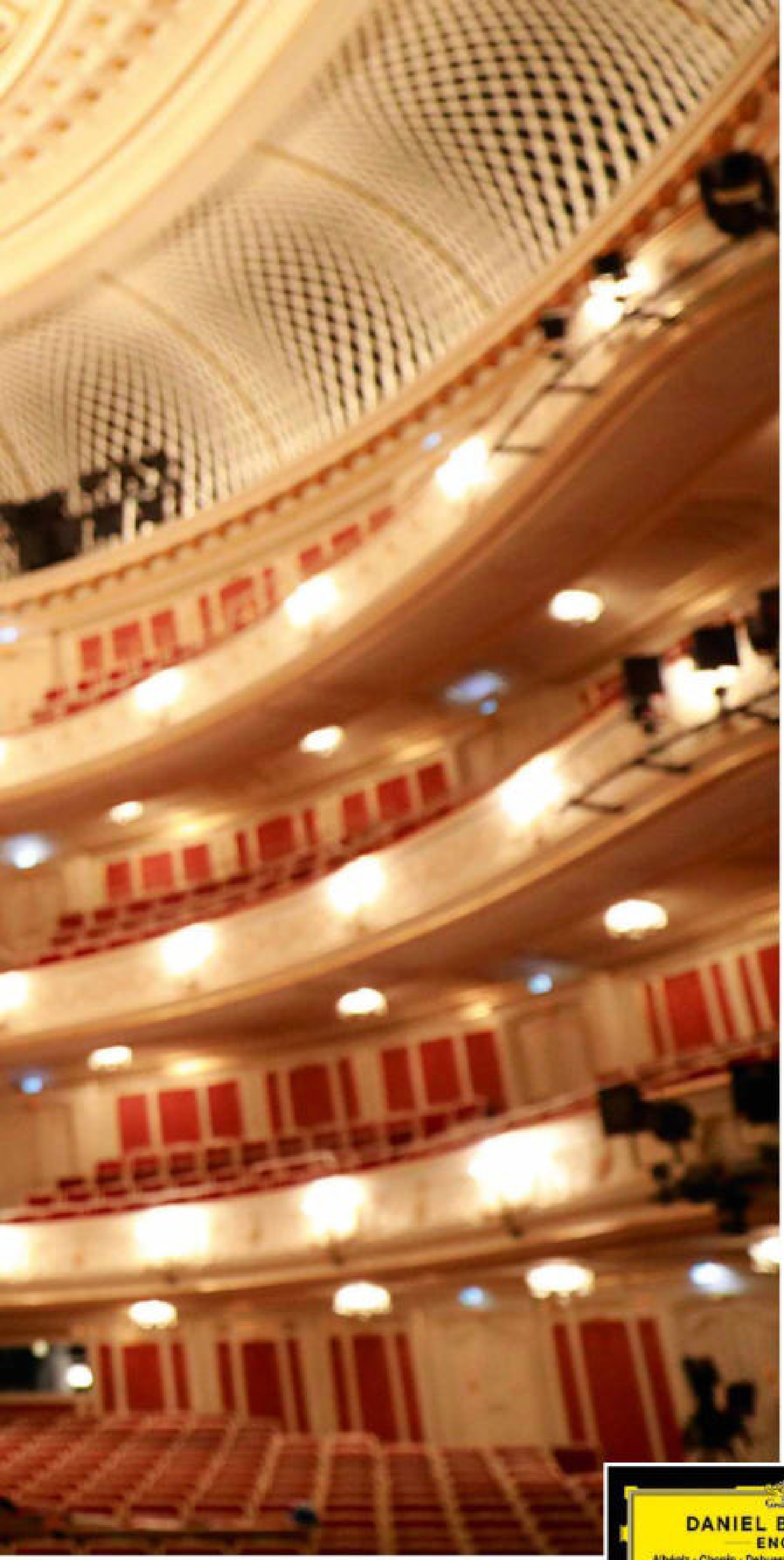
Barenboim himself is complex at the best of times. Twenty years ago, Paul Smaczny made a documentary about him called *Multiple Identities*, an appropriate title given his myriad influences and activities. He was born in Buenos Aires in 1942, to a family of Russian Jewish immigrants: one set of grandparents had met on the boat to Argentina. Both his parents were piano teachers. 'Whenever the doorbell rang, it was somebody coming for a piano lesson,' he recalls. 'In my childish brain, everyone played the piano!' He gave his first concert aged seven. When he was ten, his family moved to Israel. Two years later, at Igor Markevitch's conducting masterclass in Salzburg, he came to the attention of the great conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler, who declared him a phenomenon.

'To play the piano in an interesting way, you have to think orchestrally'

Barenboim's two strands as pianist and conductor ran concurrently almost from the beginning – the two activities not so much feeding one another as presenting different manifestations of the same musical outlook. 'To play the piano in an interesting way, you have to think orchestrally, in the way you balance the chords and look for different colours,' Barenboim says. 'It's nothing to do with my being a conductor or not. I used to play piano, before I became a conductor too.

'The piano is a very neutral instrument. Any weight you put on the key will make a sound – if you just put an ashtray on the E flat, the note sounds. But the neutrality gives you so many possibilities. It is like painting on a white wall, as opposed to a wall of green or yellow or black. Its neutrality means that you can really develop all sorts of sounds from this rather unimpressive start.'

Having heard him evoke an extraordinary spectrum in his cycles of Beethoven and Schubert sonatas in London, I want to know how he does it. 'If you have orchestral colours in your head, you will find the physical means,' he says. 'One note cannot be expressive on the piano. You can play a very expressive one note on the violin, cello or viola, but not on the piano, because the instrument doesn't have this disposition. It is the connection between two notes or more that makes the beauty of the sound on the piano. It cannot sustain a note at the same length as a stringed or wind instrument – when you put pressure on the note, the note makes



Indivisible musicianship: (clockwise from left) as conductor at the Berlin State Opera, 2017; with the Staatskapelle in 2018; a recital in memory of his father-in-law Dmitri Bashkirov, Moscow, 2021

GETTY

the sound and it starts immediately to disappear. Therefore, playing the piano means a constant relation of the note with time, because the time eats up the note. The piano is an instrument of illusion. And this is one of the great pleasures of playing it.'

When he turned 75, two boxed sets of his recordings were issued: 39 CDs as pianist, 46 as conductor. Now there are even more. Barenboim's latest piano album is *Encores*, a programme of favourite short works: a Chopin Nocturne, Debussy's 'Clair de lune' and so on. '"Encore" is a very nice word,' he remarks, allowing a twinkle into his voice. 'It means "more" in French, but it is translated in different ways. In Spanish, the worst of all, it is called "propina": a tip, like a tip in a restaurant, and this is horrible!' He is at pains to point out that an encore after a recital 'is not a given'.

He has seen plenty of changes in the way recordings are made, ever since his own first experiences of it in 1956, aged 13. 'I remember when CDs started coming out in the early 1980s: all these magnificent possibilities came in the sound and it was terribly complex and expensive. And now people hear music on the telephone.

'Record companies will hate me for saying this, but actually they know, I think: music is basically impossible to record. Music is there to be heard as a one and only time. We have been very lucky to have had radio first, and then the old 78s. And then the long-playing record, and the little ones, the 45s, then stereo, then the CD. All this for make-believe!

'Basically, the difference between listening to a record and listening to a live performance is like this: if you're deeply in love with someone, a recording is like having a photograph of that person, but going to the concert is like having her with you. Streaming is wonderful in this time of Covid and we can only be grateful for it, but it's like having a very good photograph of a person.'

Recently, Barenboim has spoken publicly about Jacqueline du Pré for the first time since her death in 1987 from multiple sclerosis. In a BBC4 documentary, *Daniel Barenboim: In His Own Words*, he reveals something of the artistic glory, passion and tragedy of their relationship. Their marriage has passed into the realm of legend – there is even a ballet about du Pré, *The Cellist*, by choreographer Cathy Marston, including a character called 'The Conductor'. It was only in 2011 that Barenboim returned to conducting the Elgar Cello Concerto, the work most strongly associated with du Pré, resulting in an award-winning recording with the American cellist Alisa Weilerstein and the Berlin Staatskapelle.

His life had already moved on by the time du Pré died. The Russian pianist Elena Bashkirova (daughter of the pianist Dmitri Bashkirov) became his second wife and one of their two sons, Michael, is now a well-established violin soloist. For a long spell they lived in Paris, where Barenboim was music director of the Orchestre de Paris from 1975-89. His next appointment, another long tenure, was

'A phenomenon': Barenboim as a teen in London, 1956

The keys to success

Barenboim on young pianists

'To be a pianist, you need a very strange combination of modesty and assurance. In front of the score, you cannot be modest enough. It is much more complicated to understand a score than people think. You need to constantly think: "What is meant by this *piano*? What *piano* is it? What *forte*? Slowly? How slowly?" You need a great, permanent modesty to do that. I have been playing the Beethoven sonatas for more than 60 years, but I still read the score in quite a concentrated way before I start practising, let alone playing them on stage. There are always surprises because there's always one side of the mountain that remains unseen.

'But then you're expected to go on stage and feel assured. You cannot go on stage modestly. If you play a concert it means you think you are worth people coming to hear you. So, this combination of deep modesty while studying the score, and the self-assurance to go on stage – it is very difficult to make the two coexist.

'Therefore, this fascination with success, competitions and so on is very dangerous. I think you need 90 per cent talent and dedication and maybe 10 per cent assurance to go on the stage, show what you can do and have the ambition. There is often much too much ambition in relation to the talent. But I see too much going into the publicity and building of career and competitions. Music is an art, not a sport.'

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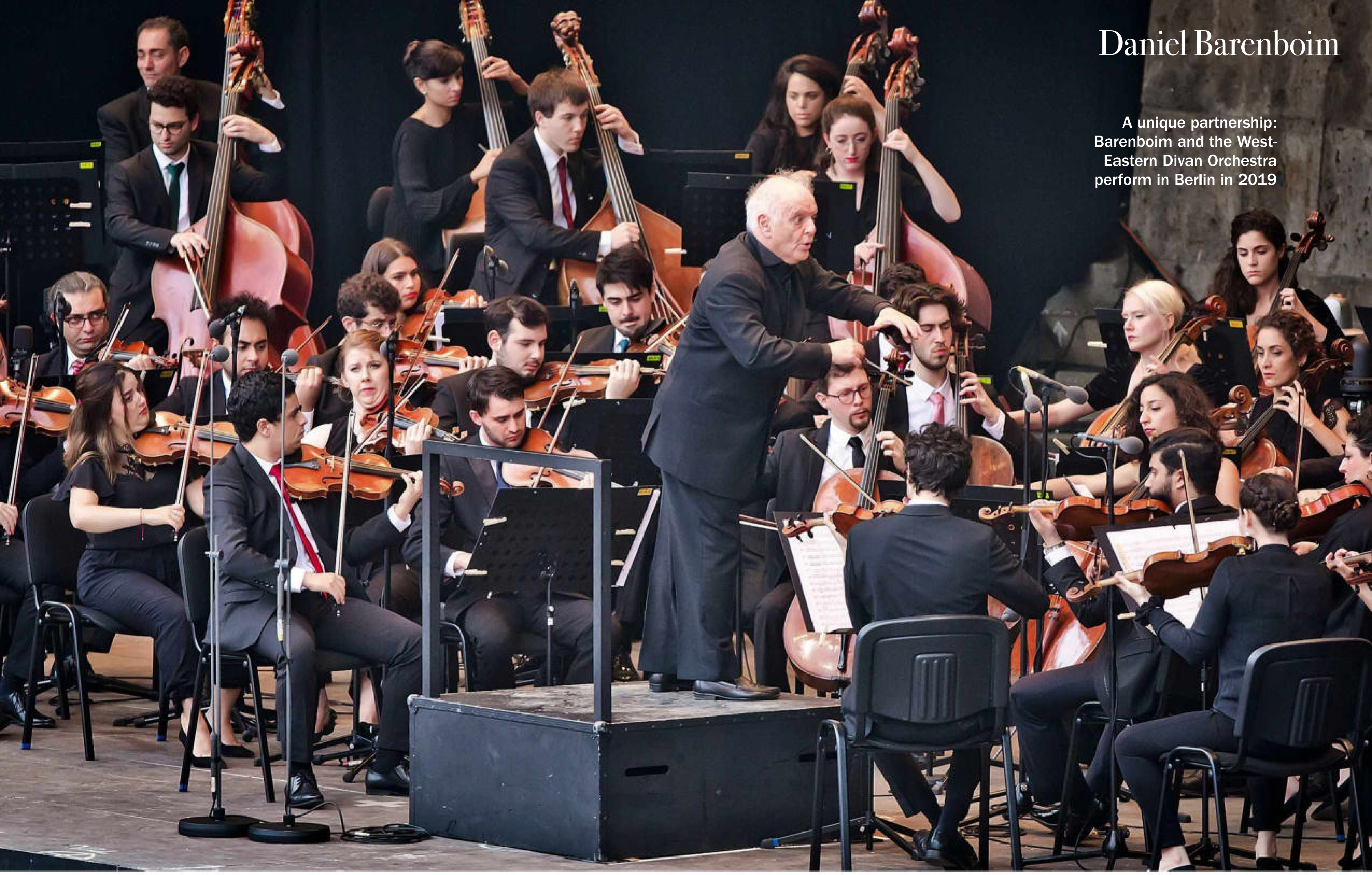


A unique partnership: Barenboim and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra perform in Berlin in 2019

GETTY

with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1991-2006). Soon he was splitting his time between the US and Germany: he was appointed Staatskapellmeister of Berlin's Staatsoper Unter den Linden and its orchestra in 1992, and 'chief conductor for life' in 2000.

Hearing his performances with the Staatskapelle, you can be struck by the streamlined, micro-controlled quality as much as its dark-hued string tone and technicolour brass playing. Barenboim is adamant about how that sense of unity works: 'An orchestra that sounds well means that the whole orchestra breathes the same way and with the same intensity. There are many aspects: the phrasing, the dynamic accents, the legato, so many things. But basically you must make them breathe as if there was one major lung for the whole orchestra.

'I'm very happy conducting the Staatsoper,' he says, 'because I feel we all think the same way about what we are playing, the same dynamic, the same line. Now, it doesn't mean that it will always stay like this. Once the concert is over, if the musicians have different opinions about it, if they think something was maybe a little slow, that's absolutely OK – but they must think the same while playing. I don't claim that there is only one way to play every piece of music. Not at all. But for every piece, while the orchestra is playing, they must all think the same about it.'

Barenboim became the first person to hold an Israeli and a Palestinian passport

Back in 2019, allegations against him of bullying and a 'temperamental' or 'autocratic' approach surfaced from some of the orchestral players. Autocracy and temper are scarcely new to the conducting profession – even if they are thankfully less prevalent in it than they used to be – which may partly explain why Barenboim did not experience 'cancellation' by a spat of public outrage. The incident certainly hit the headlines, but the Staatsoper management stood by him, renewing his contract as general music director until 2027. That year Barenboim will turn 85.

Meanwhile he works as closely as ever with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, which he co-created in 1999 with the Palestinian scholar Edward Said, bringing young musicians from Israel and Arabic nations to work together and exchange ideas. Barenboim became in 2008 the first person to hold both an Israeli and a Palestinian passport, the latter presented to him in recognition of his efforts towards this exceptional cultural exchange.

The West-Eastern Divan too has been struck by the pandemic's restrictions: Barenboim says that last year they managed just a few concerts in Salzburg. In May 2022, a significant European tour with Smetana's *Má vlast* is planned, culminating in the Prague Spring Festival. 'I will be desolate if that gets cancelled,' he remarks.

Yet whatever transpires, Barenboim's determination is undimmed: music can, will and must continue helping to bridge the gulfs between people. 'It's what music is about and what happens when there

'A great composer': with Pierre Boulez, 2005; (below) Boulez successor Philippe Manoury

A present-day perspective

Barenboim on contemporary music

'Pierre Boulez was one of the great composers of all time and it's impossible to imagine that someone will take his place, but in my opinion there are some excellent composers working today.

'I've done quite a lot of contemporary music, especially here in Berlin: works of Jörg Widmann, Matthias Pintscher, Luca Francesconi and Philippe Manoury (pictured below), composers of other nationalities, and they all have something to say. I'm also very interested in the direction of electronics in music. I remember, I once went with Pierre Boulez to IRCAM when it was started in the 1970s, and he said to me: "This will be very important." I said, "Pierre, sorry, I can't relate to electronics or anything which doesn't go with live music." He said: "You might be right – but it will develop." And it's true. Now with live electronics there are many wonderful possibilities.

'A few months ago I played a wonderful work by Philippe Manoury for piano with live electronics, *Das Wohlpräparierte Klavier*, and I enjoyed it tremendously. I don't like old-fashioned electronics added to the music, but live electronics, when they are well made and well put together, can be extremely fascinating.'

GETTY, HARALD HOFFMANN, TOMOKO HIDAKI

Glory, passion and tragedy: (above) with Jacqueline du Pré in 1967, the year they married; only recently has he revisited the Elgar

is a concert and people come to it,' he says. 'I remember playing Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier* and *Goldberg Variations* in Ramallah, and a feeling of community on evenings like this, which gives a lot of spiritual energy to the audiences there. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a political conflict, it is a human conflict. It is two people who each believe they have the right to live on the same territory without the other, and this is not a constructive human way of thinking. The political developments of this problem are very unhealthy and nasty.'

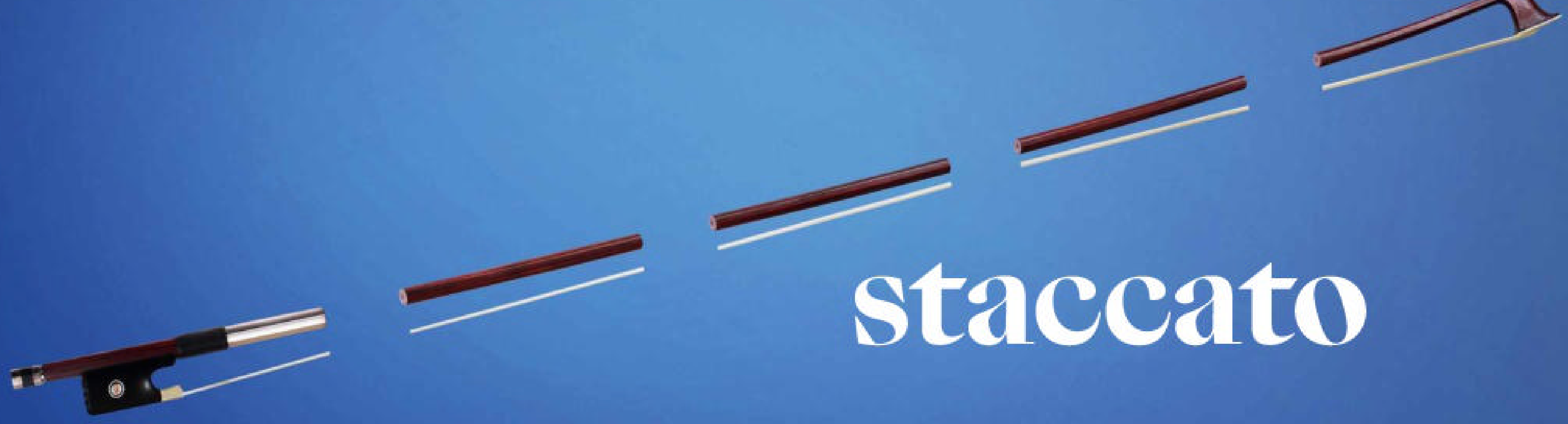
Having established the orchestra as a beloved international presence, Barenboim went on to realise a further cherished dream: the creation of the Barenboim-Said Academy in Berlin, a state-of-the-art conservatoire beside the Staatsoper with a magnificent new Frank Gehry-designed concert hall, the Pierre Boulez Saal, at its heart. Here the ideals of the West-Eastern Divan are being expanded. When its doors opened in 2016, Barenboim called it 'an experiment in utopia' as 90 talented Middle Eastern students were offered the chance to study there.

On the night the London Olympics opened in 2012, Barenboim and the West-Eastern Divan gave a roof-raising account of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at the BBC Proms, followed by one of the idealistic speeches we have almost come to expect from him (perhaps even more than musical encores). A couple of hours later, he walked into the Olympic opening ceremony as one of four great humanitarians, each carrying one corner of the Olympic flag.

No other conductor could have fulfilled such a role. Barenboim's extra cut-through perhaps lies in his consciousness of the parallels between musical processes and those of life itself – and his ability to convey this idea in his performances. In his book *Everything is Connected*, he demonstrates that music is palpably a metaphor for life and society, or at least for a society that works. To give one example, he writes: 'What is, ultimately, perhaps the most difficult lesson for the human being – learning to live with discipline yet with passion, with freedom yet with order – is evident in any single phrase of music.'

Now he says simply: 'Music is utopia'. We have him to thank for keeping that ideal alive.

Daniel Barenboim, Gautier Capuçon, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic, Freiburger Barockorchester, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Gürzenich-Orchester Köln, Augustin Hadelich, Klangforum Wien, Daniel Müller-Schott, Andris Nelsons, Petr Popelka, David Robertson, Gerhild Romberger, François-Xavier Roth, Les Siècles, Emmanuel Tjeknavorian, Anna Vinnitskaya, Vox Luminis, Alisa Weilerstein, West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, Wiener Philharmoniker



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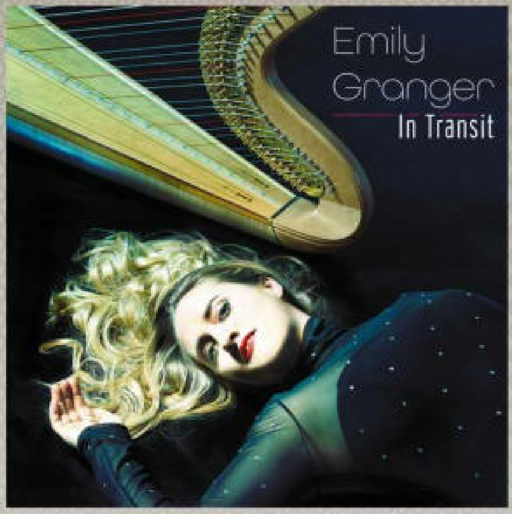

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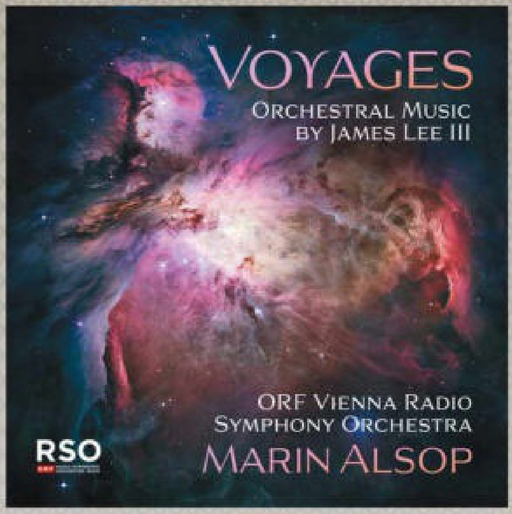

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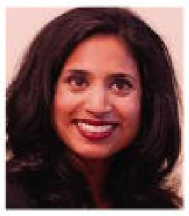
> As soon as I realised playing song involves images, text and sound, I knew this was what I really loved

THE BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE INTERVIEW

Joseph Middleton



As he prepares for a four-day celebration of song as artistic director of Leeds Lieder, the leading collaborative pianist discusses his art, and much besides, with **Natasha Loges**

PHOTOGRAPHY: RICHARD CANNON

On the day we speak, Joseph Middleton's first task is to find a flat-headed screwdriver. He needs to take the front off his piano so he can extricate the pencil and notebook his toddler has 'posted' inside it. Although collaborative pianists (or accompanists) are renowned for their versatility, piano-based DIY may be a first. But there's much more to his life than playing the piano.

'If I hadn't studied music, I'd have done something to do with visual art,' he tells me. 'I love words and language. And I got hooked on voices early on. As soon as I realised that playing song involves those three things – images, text and sound – I knew this was what I really loved.'

And then there's Leeds Lieder, the organisation that, to quote its own tagline, has been 'filling the city with song' since 2004. As its artistic director since late 2014, Middleton and a small, dedicated team have developed a multi-faceted annual festival. This year's festival theme, 'Song Illuminated', explores what this uniquely intimate artform reveals about humanity's relationship to the world. Over four packed days from 28 April, the Yorkshire city will welcome performers including sopranos Dorothea Röschmann and Louise Alder, and the much-loved duo of tenor Ian Bostridge and pianist Imogen Cooper – Röschmann and Alder's recitals will be two of four that feature a certain Joseph Middleton at the piano.

Röschmann is one of four top musicians passing on her expertise in masterclasses, while other events include a joyous 'Bring and Sing!' choral jamboree and the informal Lieder Lounge. Beginning at 10pm, the Lieder Lounge is one of three events in which the Leeds Lieder programme stretches into late-night concerts, for which Middleton has special affection. 'I want the late-night concerts to feel atmospheric. They are lit and staged differently. The seating is relaxed.

At the keyboard: Middleton performs at Leeds Lieder, 2016

Five sublime songs

Joseph Middleton recommends...

Ravel *Shéhérazade*
This cycle is one of the most delicious journeys a pianist can undertake. The virtuosic passages take flight and the melting pot of the Orient, French and Basque cultures call for heady transparency and crystal clear textures from the piano.

Helen Grime *Bright Travellers*
Fiona Benson's poems are extraordinarily moving, raw and honest and Grime responds with music of the utmost beauty. Her piano writing is jewel-like, and the songs run the gamut from virtuosity to sparse folk-like melodies.

Schubert *Die Götter Griechenlands*
By not setting Schiller's whole text, Schubert gives the impression of putting something incomplete in front us, as though we're examining fragments of pottery. We're left searching for something that is no longer possible – the cruel illusion that even if we want to, it's not possible for us to go back in time.

Mahler *Ich bin der Welt*
The energy and concentration required to find a trance-like state in passages of *Ich bin der Welt* make this most spiritual song one of the most thoughtful utterances to share with an audience. Mahler wrote that this song 'is my very self'.

Schumann *Stille Liebe*, Op. 35
The nub of this song might be seen as 'Clara, I love you and I'm sorry I cannot find success in large-scale symphonic and operatic writing.' And here is the paradox, for a jewel of the utmost tenderness, love, compassion and immediacy unfolds.

I want it to feel much more like people coming into someone's home, not the normal concert hall – somewhere where people can let their imaginations doodle'.

And while Leeds Lieder will always have the likes of Schubert and Schumann at its heart, new music flourishes too. Substantial works have been commissioned from composers such as Hannah Kendall, Daniel Kidane and, this year, Deborah Pritchard. 'That thud on the doormat of a brand-new work that nobody has yet played is daunting,' says Middleton, 'but also a real thrill and privilege. At the festival, we have a major new work written every time.'

With many local friends – there are partnerships with Opera North, Leeds University, Leeds Conservatoire and the Leeds Piano Competition, for instance – Leeds Lieder is deeply embedded within the rich cultural ecosystem which characterises the region, and alongside the four-day festival and year-round concert series, it also makes an ongoing contribution to local music education. 'I didn't come from a particularly musical family, but my dad really loved listening to music,' Middleton tells me. 'We always had gigantic things playing at home: Shostakovich symphonies, Mahler symphonies. We went to bed with the house shaking every night.'

Alongside a visionary music teacher, Middleton had subsidised music lessons on violin, flute and organ at his comprehensive school. Leeds Lieder, he says, does everything possible to ensure that this generation's musical potential will be similarly fulfilled. 'We've got an amazing team going into schools. Pre-Covid, hundreds of children would come to Leeds Town Hall and sing Brahms or Butterworth! It's the most ordinary and the most extraordinary thing.'

Having his own children – when they're not posting pencils in pianos – is a sharp reminder of what Middleton calls a 'gigantic divide' between families that can or can't invest in music. 'I think the work that we do in Leeds with the school kids is one of the most vital things that we do.'

For Middleton, this is not about channelling people into creative careers, but nurturing empathy, imagination and social development. Still, it is hugely rewarding when those children flourish. 'I was auditioning some final-year singers from King's College, Cambridge for the University's Lieder Scheme [which Middleton founded and directs]. One CV said "Leeds Lieder" on it. So I asked him what he'd done, and he said his first interaction with any type of classical music was a Leeds Lieder singing project. I'm not saying everyone needs to end up at King's, but you just never know which kid it's going to profoundly affect.'

Running the festival has been bruising for the past two years, with any optimism at planning stages nipped in the bud by cancellations. All the freelancers were paid in full by Leeds Lieder – a decision arising from Middleton's own experience as a performer. But he praises his team's willingness to 'roll up sleeves' and make things work. His optimism is more impressive given that pandemic aftershocks are still rumbling on. But he is keen to remind audiences that everything possible has been done to make concert halls extremely safe.

A perfect partnership: (left) Middleton is joined by soprano Carolyn Sampson and tenor Julien Prégardien at 'Poetry into Song', the opening concert of the 2018 Leeds Lieder festival

As Covid (hopefully) retreats, however, the challenges posed by Brexit remain – loss of freedom of movement, endless and costly paperwork, and damaged artistic connections with European neighbours. Middleton feels he's fortunate that his agents handle most of the practicalities, but younger artists don't have this support. 'Honestly, if this had happened to me ten years ago, it would have been curtains. There's no buffer there. It's something I feel really concerned about.' Equally, the European art-song tradition in Britain has long been enriched by the cosmopolitan student community, and working with everyone from Spanish mezzos to Ukrainian sopranos has illuminated to Middleton not only details of language, but entire cultures.

Music – and especially song – remains at the core of Middleton's whirlwind life: 'The thing that I always enjoyed most was working with others. After I finished my degree, I started reading for an MPhil, but I abandoned the thought of a PhD when I realised I couldn't marry the academic work with playing. So I applied to music college on a whim, and went to the Royal Academy of Music as an accompanist.'

At the RAM, Middleton was steadily – even stealthily – encouraged by his teacher, the pianist Malcolm Martineau, to add working with singers to his more usual chamber music fare. In turn, when it comes to tips to pass on, he emphasises that any aspiring collaborative pianist has to build a bulletproof technique. 'The assumption that accompanists can get away with being less proficient is a slightly old-fashioned view peddled by people who haven't ever looked at a song and realised how it's been composed.'

Effective collaboration involves practically memorising his own part while experiencing the unfolding text both with and through the singer. And recording needs different skills again, as Middleton knows from his extensive discography. 'In a recording studio, I'm trying give the flavour of it being live, even though you record most song discs of 70 minutes over three or four days. You're not doing it repeatedly because you haven't bothered to learn it! It's more like building up a jigsaw, where you're thinking, "If I do this bit like that, will it match the next bit?"'

ROBERT PIWKO/ARENA PAL, THANKS TO THE LANDMARK TRUST

Joining forces: 'The thing I always enjoyed most was working with others'

'The work that we do in Leeds with school kids is one of the most vital things we do'

Fascinated by expert recording teams, he speaks admiringly of these often invisible professionals who can tinker with the minutiae of microphone placement until the right acoustic world is forged. But this is nothing like the tightrope walk of live performance, in which, despite hours of rehearsal, there is space for spontaneity, especially when the singer shares his love of risk. 'When I played for Tom Allen's 70th-birthday tour, we did Schubert's *Winterreise* eight or ten times, and each one was completely different. Sometimes you would begin and think the evening was going to be black and bitter from the very first note. Other evenings, he would start like a lost child'.

And it's not just the musical decisions that can be unexpected. Middleton remembers turning up for a recital to find the piano on its side, legless (mercifully, they were screwed on in time). He also recalls a last-minute performance for a BBC Radio 3 broadcast during which he realised mid-song that the photocopies he was given were missing a page, forcing him to improvise an accompaniment.

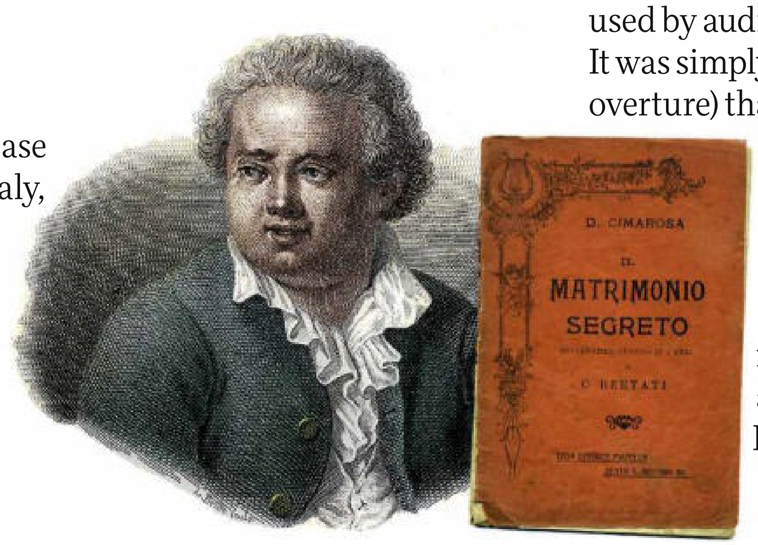
But responsive, attentive audiences more than compensate for the stress of being a busy working musician, festival director, educator and parent. 'My experience with talking to audiences is that most of them listen so carefully,' he says. 'Some of the things people say are so profound, they show that they really get what I was trying to achieve.'

With the Leeds Lieder festival fast approaching, Middleton couldn't be more fulfilled by his musical life. As he tells me in closing, if an alien visited from Mars and we had to show them the best that humanity had to offer, 'we'd get them to listen to a song'.

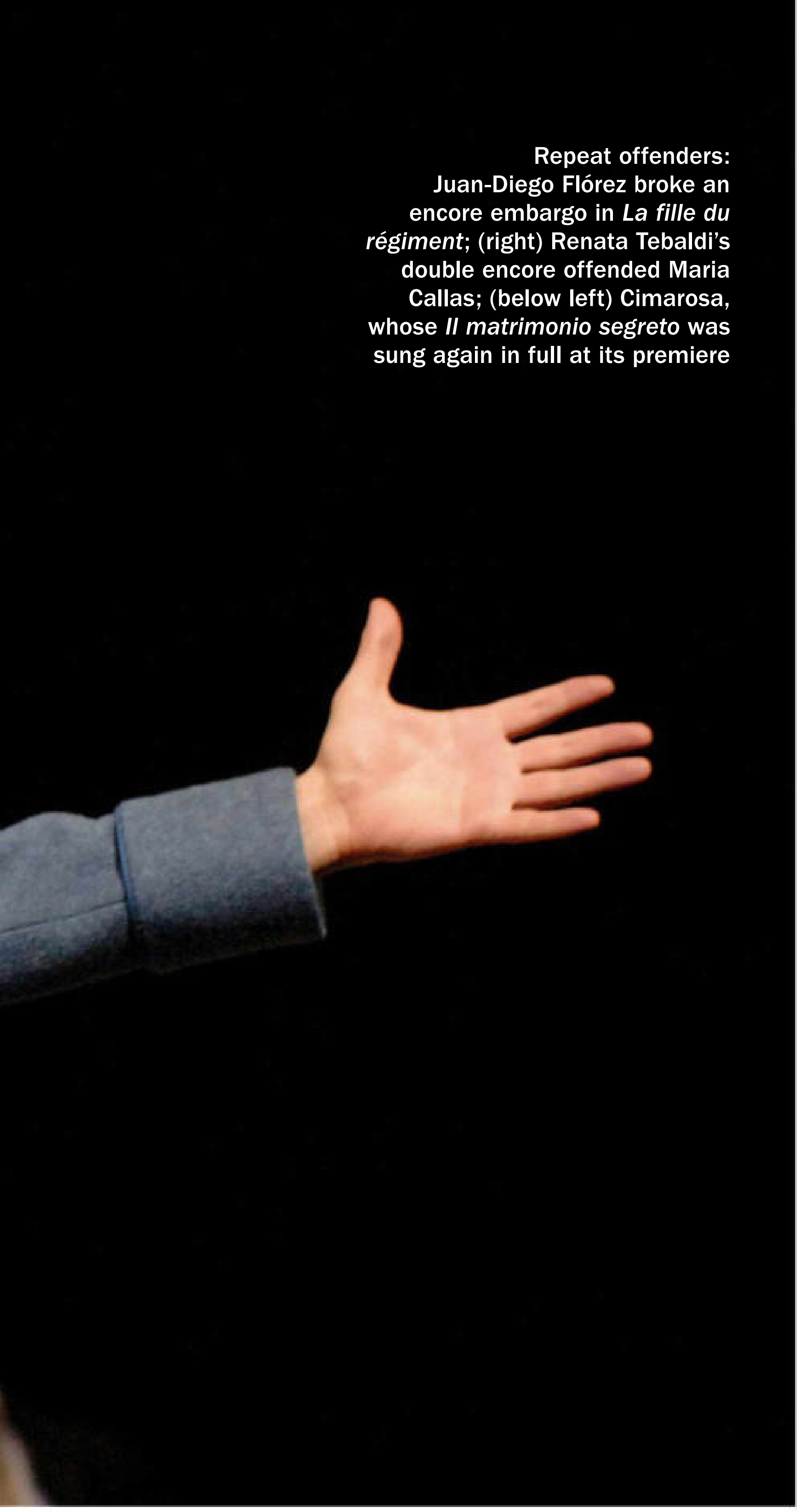
A little extra

Although loved by audiences, the encore has had an uneven history and often an uncertain future, explains Brian Wise

Sometimes an encore outshines the concert preceding it. Such was the case at a recital last October in Parma, Italy, when the soprano Lisette Oropesa decided to add a fourth, unrehearsed encore to her programme. A problem loomed: the selection, 'Sempre Libera' from Verdi's *La traviata*, requires a tenor, which had not been arranged. Sensing the impending void, Liu Jianwei, a music student from a nearby conservatory, rose from his seat in the auditorium and belted out the offstage tenor part, to the apparent delight of Oropesa and the audience. Audience video captured the moment and clips soon ricocheted across social media, YouTube and TikTok. Liu later met Oropesa backstage and offered what turned out to be an unnecessary apology.



The French word 'encore' (literally, 'again') first appeared in English in the early 18th century, used by audiences of Italian opera in London. It was simply the repetition of a selection (aria, overture) that had garnered enough applause to be performed again. But over time, some encores have risen to sensational status on their own. Consider one that pianist Rudolf Serkin gave in Berlin in 1921. The formal programme had ended with a crowd-pleasing rendition of Bach's Fifth *Brandenburg Concerto*, complete



Repeat offenders: Juan-Diego Flórez broke an encore embargo in *La fille du régiment*; (right) Renata Tebaldi's double encore offended Maria Callas; (below left) Cimarosa, whose *Il matrimonio segreto* was sung again in full at its premiere

with a blazing cadenza. Backstage, violinist Adolf Busch urged Serkin to perform an encore. 'What shall I play?' the 18-year-old Serkin asked. 'The *Goldberg Variations*,' Busch replied, jokingly. The pianist took him at his word and delivered Bach's entire work. Serkin later recalled that the only remaining audience members were Busch and his wife, the pianist Artur Schnabel and the musicologist Alfred Einstein.

A very different element of surprise coloured the encores given in 1951 by Renata Tebaldi during a joint recital with Maria Callas in Rio de Janeiro. The sopranos had agreed that neither would upstage the other by performing encores, but Tebaldi gave not one but two. As the story goes, Callas later berated Tebaldi publicly at a dinner party, referencing a recent flop in Italy and setting off a longstanding rivalry.

Eighteenth- and early-19th-century encores grew out of a more freewheeling era for concert etiquette. When audiences called for one at the premiere of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, the *Allegretto* received a second hearing. But mid-show encores posed a larger test for opera houses. As Theodore Fenner details in *Opera in London*, impresarios and critics found them vulgar and intrusive but also a statistical gauge of public taste. As a *Times* reviewer noted in 1791, 'John Bull will perhaps think it extraordinary that during the evening there did not occur one encore'.

Encore practice was more tightly controlled in royal theatres, where only a monarch or his deputy could demand one. When Cimarosa's comedy *Il matrimonio segreto* was staged in

> Renata Tebaldi's two encores of 1951 set off a longstanding rivalry with Maria Callas

Vienna before the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II, the monarch was so pleased that he ordered dinner for the cast and then called for a repeat of the nearly three-hour opera – possibly the longest encore in history.

In early-19th-century Paris, professional claques known as 'bisseurs' were hired to hype singers by calling out for encores. Almost everyone understood their role, and prima donnas who denied audiences encores did so at their peril. When German soprano Gertrud Elisabeth Mara refused to sing one in a 1785 performance at King's Theatre, the audience angrily hissed. A *Times* reviewer took her side, arguing that 'the airs ... should not be bravo'd till the symphony be closed'. But when Mara refused again in 1793, *The Times* this time decided 'she was very properly hissed for refusing'.

Johannes Moser
Cellist

These days I tend to play an encore with the whole cello section after a concerto, such as Pablo Casals's *Song of the Birds* or the second movement of Grieg's *Holberg Suite* arranged for six cellos. Often a concerto is more like a symphony with a solo part, so rather than pushing the rest of the orchestra aside in the encore, it's nice to be more inclusive.

Encore choices may have changed in recent years as the role of the soloist is changing. There's no longer that singular, star cult. Instead, the soloist is a kind of ambassador between the orchestra and the public. The encore becomes an opportunity to make a statement about how you view your role in that context.

GETTY, SARAH WIJZENBEEK/KOPIE

More often, divas embraced show-stopping moments. During a Metropolitan Opera touring production of Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* in Boston in 1895, an upright piano was wheeled onto the stage so that soprano Nellie Melba could sing her encore. When soprano Marcella Sembrich was called back for multiple encores during Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Washington, DC, 'even the musicians dropped their instruments, stood up in their seats, and cried "Bravo!"' reported *The Washington Evening Star*. By the 1910s, conductors including Arturo Toscanini had seen enough, and refused to grant singers their starry moment, thus marking a decline in the practice.

The Met drew a line with a chaotic 1924 production of Flotow's *Martha*. As the audience called on tenor Beniamino Gigli to repeat the aria 'M'appari', conductor Gennaro Papi pressed ahead with the next scene even as Gigli was still returning for more bows. The words 'positively no encores allowed' began appearing in capital letters in programmes, .

Both Milan's La Scala and the Met finally relaxed their encore policies in 2007 and '08, respectively, when tenor Juan-Diego Flórez was invited to repeat the high C-laden tenor aria from Donizetti's *La fille du régiment* (an earlier thaw at the Met came in 1994, when Luciano Pavarotti repeated an aria in *Tosca*). These moments drew both excitement and some renewed tutting. 'In lifting official prohibitions and traditional restraints, hasn't the Met let a monster out of the bottle?' asked *Newsday* theatre critic Linda Winer. 'If tonight's audience gets an encore, won't tomorrow's feel cheated if they just get a fine performance? Without the encores does it mean that the other guy saw a better show?'

GETTY, KAUPO KIKKAS

Henning Kraggerud

Violinist

Once during a tour I realised that I had forgotten to prepare an encore, so I decided instead to trust in my ability to improvise straight from the heart. It worked out so well that I often now improvise as an introduction to the main pieces in my concert programmes. I take the harmonic progression from the central work, or any other appropriate elements, and improvise over them. In this way I'm not just performing the work of the composer – I'm a co-creator.

Our reverence for classical repertoire can sometimes feel a bit like a religion. Because encores form a less regulated part of the concert, they present the opportunity for greater creativity.

Different approaches: (far left) Hilary Hahn has commissioned new encores; (left) Rachmaninov grew weary of a certain prelude

Encores are usually plotted carefully and repeated over the course of a performance run or tour. In an era of strict contracts, union rules and licensing restrictions, venues are actively involved in encore preparation to ensure a smooth and timely finish.

Yet among pianists, encore policies vary. Artur Schnabel detested them, while Evgeny Kissin dispensed 12 encores at a 2007 Carnegie Hall recital. Sergei Rachmaninov would always signal that he was done for the night by playing his Prelude in C sharp minor. 'A new composition by myself,' he said in a sarcastically theatrical voice before one Philadelphia performance, suggesting that had grown weary of the ritual. At Carnegie Hall in 1918, Rachmaninov disappointed the 'flappers' in the balconies by denying them the Prelude. 'All of flapperdom sorrowed last night,' snorted *The New York Times*'s James Gibbons Huneker, 'for there are amiable fanatics who follow this pianist from place to place hoping to hear him in this particular prelude; like the Englishman who attended every performance of the lady lion tamer hoping to see her swallowed by one of her pets.'

Some of history's most attention-getting encores have doubled as social or political statements. Daniel Barenboim and the Berlin Staatskapelle used the humble encore in 2001 as a way to introduce the Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* to Israel, breaking with the country's unofficial Wagner ban and setting off a tempest, with some audience members shouting epithets and walking out. Other performers have displayed a more relaxed side through their encores. Pianist Gabriela Montero, known for her improvisation skills, has improvised encores based on themes requested (or sung) by audience members. Violinist Pekka Kuusisto has played and sang jaunty Finnish folk songs, even leading an audience sing-along at the BBC Proms in 2016. And fellow fiddler Hilary Hahn, tired of trotting out familiar pieces, commissioned short encores for violin and piano from 26 composers, then held an online competition to choose a 27th.

Perhaps as more artists rethink performance conventions in this unsettled era, the spontaneity of a well executed encore can make its way into the formal part of programmes. Then again, there's the old show business maxim: always leave audiences wanting more

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The eyes have it

Eye contact can be an incredibly important form of musical communication – yet some conductors barely look at the orchestra. So just how valuable is it exactly in practice? Ariane Todes investigates

ILLUSTRATION: STEVE RAWLINGS/DEBUT ART

'Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread, Our eyes upon one double string.' In *The Ecstasy* John Donne is describing the way that lovers' eyes lock together, but we sometimes see something similar in concerts. Conductor and section principal eyeball each other, or quartet leader and cellist share an intense glance. Online you can watch Leonard Bernstein conducting a Haydn symphony, hands by his side, with nothing but his eyes and a grin; or Herbert von Karajan directing the musicians with his eyes clamped shut. So, what does eye contact actually achieve in music, and how important is it?

For an orchestra, eye contact serves different functions. Conductor Leonard Slatkin explains: 'Firstly, conductors make eye contact because we want the attention of an individual or a section. We may look at the trumpets when they've got a climactic entry or at the second violins if they have a difficult part where they need help. Our choice of where we look is a major part of our armouries. Secondly, we have to convey all the emotions in the music, so there's an emotional quality to the way we use our eyes – the colour, the brilliance, perhaps a smile. There are the physical gestures of our arms, hands and body language, but the face is probably most important, and the most expressive tool we have is our eyes.'

Eyes work where words fail, he says: 'When I was starting, my teacher kept saying, "Use your head and eyes to communicate rather than your mouth." Basically, a conductor only has six things to tell the orchestra: it's either faster or slower, longer or shorter, or louder or softer, and everything else is based on that. The eyes and face are what communicates all the other things.'

It's no different to talking to someone, conductor Sian Edwards explains: 'It's like any conversation with another person – you use your eyes. I can just look at you, or I can look at you with the kind of energy I want you to transmit to the musical phrase. That involves the body as well, but as human beings we're used to extremely precise, directional eye contact, and we use that in music all the time. It enhances what we're doing with our ears, which is first and foremost.'

> 'As humans we're used to extremely precise eye contact. We use that in music all the time'

From the players' side, Rebecca Jones, principal viola of BBC National Orchestra of Wales, explains how eye contact helps the performance: 'If a particular viola part is exposed and the conductor wants you to play more, they look at you to give you confidence. Some eye contact is friendlier than others – some conductors convey warmth with their eyes and that helps you play better; some glare and you

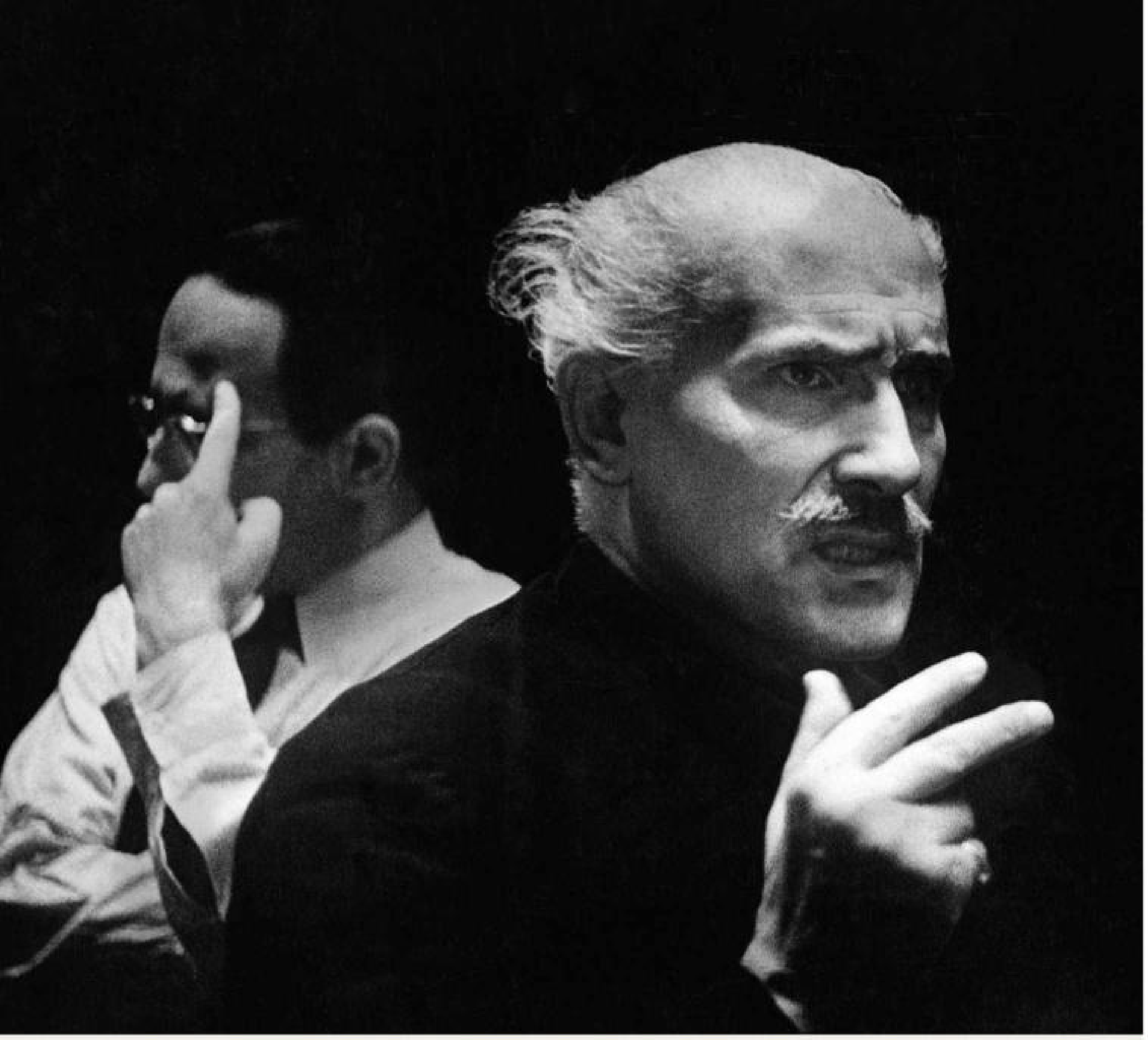
feel they're not happy with you – but generally, it is positive. You feel confident that they are aware of what's going on in the music and are in the piece with you. If there isn't any eye contact, it feels like it's just them with their score.'

Rachel Gough, principal bassoon of the London Symphony Orchestra, has played the opening solo of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* countless times and is also wary of the glare: 'The times I feel most comfortable are when the conductor looks at me beforehand with an open gesture, as if to say, "Now over to you". I will start and then close my eyes because I prefer not to engage with anything other than the sound, the time and the music. I have performed with meticulous conductors who have insisted on beating every turn and pause, with a large amount of eye contact, and it can be quite uncomfortable. People are often surprised by how little it seems that orchestral players actually look at the conductor. They imagine we will be eyeballing the conductor at crucial points, but a lot is done using peripheral vision.'

Contact with other players is just as important, she says: 'I rely on having sightlines to the leader, the principal double bass and principal cello, and if we have something to do together there is a little visual acknowledgement.' It's the same for Rebecca Jones: 'I can play much better with other sections if I have eye contact with them. If the violas and cellos have something together, it's good to have contact with the other principal. It's a signal that we've all got our ears open. If there is a barrier, it feels very lonely.'

Over the last two years, players and conductors have had to get used to various barriers, and conductor Paul McCreesh says that masks have presented a challenge: 'Our faces give away so much information. Even if conductors use their faces in hysterical ways sometimes, there is a tremendous sense of energy in that communication. The eyes are the windows of the soul and that's the most important thing. I need to see that smile – or scowl – otherwise I feel I'm not communicating.' That's why, like many conductors, he won't wear spectacles: 'I would never dream of conducting in glasses, because the expressivity of my face, and my eyes in particular, gives so much more information.'

Another key relationship is between the conductor and concertmaster (leader). 'For a concertmaster, who has their violin under their chin and their arms going,' explains Leonard Slatkin, 'the only point of contact they have with the conductor is their eyes, which tell you, "Yes, I agree with what you're doing" or "We need to



Directed gazes: (left) Arturo Toscanini's eyes conveyed all manner of information and emotion; (bottom left) Fritz Reiner often terrified players, while Bernard Haitink used his eyes to encourage; (below) conductor Paul McCreesh

stop and tell the orchestra what's going on." All these things are conveyed.'

Aside from the principal, Slatkin mainly glances towards the back, he says: 'I rarely look at the players right in front of me. I try to look to the people sitting in the back desks, because that way I have the feeling that I'm leading the whole orchestra and not just communicating with the eight people in the front.'

In concertos, he barely looks at the soloist, either: 'Eye contact is used mostly to coordinate entrances and make sure that specific spots are together, so I don't look at the soloist much – it's a case where listening is more important.'

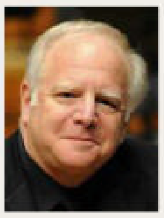
A lack of eye contact can sometimes indicate that something has gone wrong, though, as McCreesh explains: 'I have seen films where conductors have seriously over-stepped the line and they get the eyes-down treatment. The refusal to look is ultimately the most damning weapon an orchestra can ever use – one never wants to go there.'

Despite its importance, eye contact is rarely taught in specific terms. 'We tend to talk more about the physical process of moving one's arms and the way we use our body, but not how communication comes from the face,' says McCreesh. 'That's partly because it's so personal, and if it isn't instinctive, it's difficult to teach. You can't just say, "Flash a brilliant look at the oboe in bar four." It has to be organic or it doesn't work.'

Edwards offers her students some tricks, though: 'If they're working with an orchestra that's seated differently to what they're used to, I tell them to put stickies all over their room,

Views from the podium

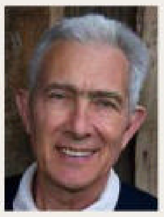
Legendary conductors recalled



Leonard Slatkin *(conductor)*
'Arturo Toscanini was legally blind towards the end of his life and yet he was still conducting, from memory. He had beady, penetrating eyes that told you everything about what he wanted from the music – much more than his actual conducting gestures, which were stolid and rigorous. If you watch any video of him, you can see that the main point of communication with the orchestra is through those eyes.

Fritz Reiner scowled a lot – he could completely devastate people with just the look of his glassy eyes. Watch a Leonard Bernstein video, and for all the gyrations and extrovert tendencies he had on the podium, his eyes are always wide open, gathering information.'

Sian Edwards *(conductor)*
'When you look at a film of any great conductor, you'll see them looking around the orchestra all the time. Carlos Kleiber hardly ever blinks – you see him panning around the orchestra as he's conducting. It's not an inviting gaze, but it joins everyone together – it's irresistible. Bernard Haitink had big blue eyes, always looking early enough that the players felt like he had created a space for them to put the sound in.'



Arnold Steinhardt *(violinist)*
'In videos you can see how engaged Bernstein was with the musicians, how he would look at them. Sometimes his look is stern, sometimes filled with rapture. When Bernstein has that ecstatic look, your vibrato gets hotter, your bow pressure has to change – all kinds of things have to happen within that parameter of good solid ensemble playing. That's what creates goosebumps in music.'

Peripheral partnership: cellist Christian Elliott goes by glances with the Zehetmair Quartet

where the second flute or first violins are, and to practise looking over in good time. When you watch the wonderful conductors, they look up early at players, but not too early. It's important to practise.'

In professional choirs, the singers tend to have their heads up, looking at the conductor, but the response they get might depend on the size of the group, according to McCreesh: 'If there are 400 people in the choir, I'm not sure that whatever I do with my eyes is going to have an impact on the bass in the back row, but with an *a cappella* choir you're up close and your gestures should be more delicate. Breathing is particularly important with choirs, and with this size of ensemble eye contact becomes more important.'

What is the dynamic in string quartets? For Guarneri Quartet first violinist Arnold Steinhardt, eye contact doesn't necessarily help ensemble: 'Our mentor, Alexander Schneider of the Budapest Quartet, used to say that to play together you have to "eat fingers". He meant don't look at the others – look at their fingers. Sometimes people would say, "You play so well together, but you don't look at one another". It was true, because I was "eating fingers", watching Michael Tree move up the fingerboard so I could move up my fingerboard together with him. When we looked at one another, it was usually because somebody had made a mistake or done something unusual.'

Christian Elliott is cellist of the Zehetmair Quartet, which performs by memory. You might think that not having music would encourage eye contact, but it would seem not. 'We do look at each other,' he says, 'although not necessarily directly into each other's eyes, but at each other's faces and body language – those can be the most helpful clues. With some players, you know something's going to happen just by seeing their eyebrows go up – it can signal some kind of intensity coming. Actual eye contact is pretty minimal. Sometimes it can almost be too intense and intimate to prolong.'

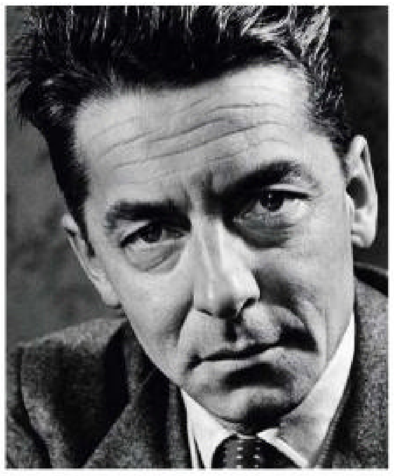
Paradoxically, it can be more useful with strangers than with regular colleagues, he suggests: 'It's a great way to get the chamber music relationship off the ground, to quicken the friendship in the process of playing and develop trust. It's usually something very fleeting to say that we're there for each other. Sometimes that's all that's necessary in chamber music. We pick up on aural signals because we've made that initial contact with the eyes.'

For Steinhardt, too, eye contact is about creating a bond: 'When I play duets or Bach's Double Violin Concerto, eye contact becomes more important. I might not know a colleague and afterwards we might walk away and never see one another again, but when we're playing, we're the closest of friends. Looking at one another is an affirmation of that.'

That energy helps the audience, too, he says: 'If we're playing and looking at one another and enjoying it, that conveys to the audience: "Look, they're fantastic players, what great music these duos are, and not only that, they're having a ball."'

One memory lives in his mind – playing the Mendelssohn D minor Piano Trio with Jacqueline du Pré and Thomas Schippers at the 1965 Spoleto Festival: 'There is a place in the last movement where the music builds up to the joyous outburst of melody. There was a look of rapture on Jackie's face that raised the music to a level of exuberance and joy – a feeling of the miracle of music and of Mendelssohn's genius. The way she played that phrase and looked up at me, glowing, created a completely different dimension to the music – that's why I remember the way she looked at me so many years later. I think of that as one of the greatest musical moments of my life.'

And maybe that's it. Eye contact between musicians isn't a necessary condition for great music. Conductors have other means to convey their intentions and instrumentalists find the information they need by watching technical cues. Sometimes it can be downright embarrassing to be eyeballed by someone you know very well, and if a conductor sustains a glance too long it might seem critical. But occasionally there are fleeting moments where something passes wordlessly – friendship, encouragement, solidarity, shared endeavour, perhaps even love – and maybe that makes eye contact the very essence of music.



Herbert von Karajan

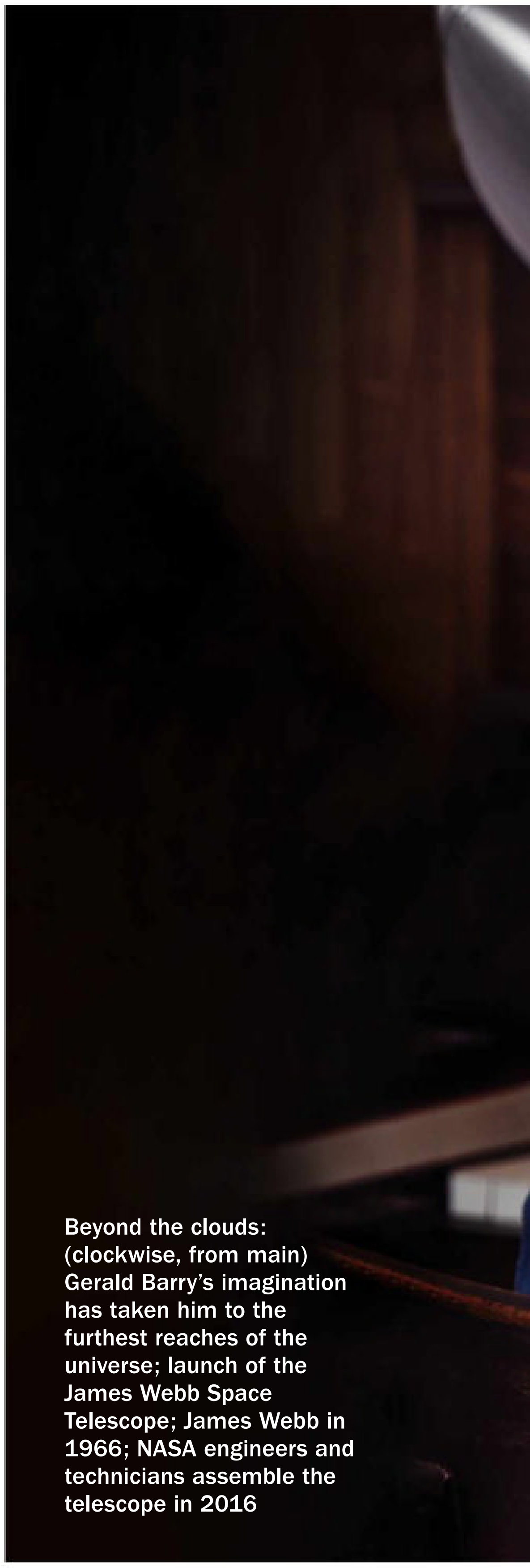
'Herbert von Karajan had phenomenally dazzling blue eyes and, from what I understand, if he looked at you, you immediately felt a vivid connection. He would play around with that and not look at anybody, but invite the orchestra to do something very internal.

'There's a recording of him doing Strauss's *Metamorphosen* where he only looks up once, at the Beethoven quote. The rest of the time he is looking down with his eyes shut. When young conductors try to do that, it often looks as if they are leaving the musicians to fend for themselves while they indulge in a very personal thing. That's different from closing your eyes for a wonderful moment. Karajan was working in a very particular way.'
Sian Edwards

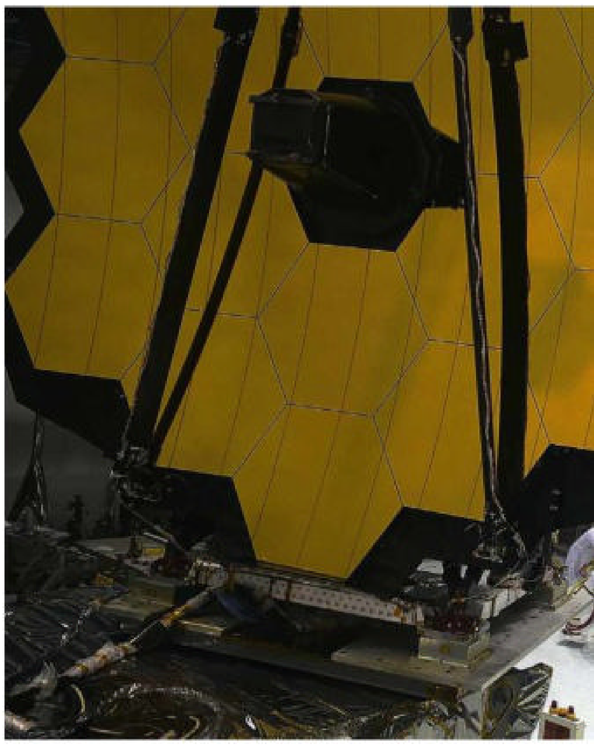
GETTY, ALAMY, NICO RODAMEL, FREDERIC LAVERRIERE

Altered state

Ever imaginative and original, the Irish composer Gerald Barry celebrates his 70th birthday by taking a look back at his unique career with Tom Stewart



Beyond the clouds: (clockwise, from main) Gerald Barry's imagination has taken him to the furthest reaches of the universe; launch of the James Webb Space Telescope; James Webb in 1966; NASA engineers and technicians assemble the telescope in 2016



In January, a million miles from Earth, the James Webb Space Telescope arrived at the point from which it now gazes out into the origins of the universe. Impatient astronomers might want to contact Gerald Barry, who has finished a new orchestral piece, *What the Webb Telescope Saw*, months before the first images arrive back on Earth. 'It's planets and galaxies in two-part counterpoint,' he says frankly from his home in Dublin. NASA's meticulous construction of supercomputers and gold-plated mirrors has become an obsession, he explains. But the charm of Barry's character – and his music – owes something to the fact that you can never tell quite how serious he's being. 'The telescope can see the whole universe so I'm sure two-part counterpoint will be in there,' he continues. 'I'll bet you £50!'

One of Ireland's most individual and most celebrated composers, Barry was born in April 1952 in Clarecastle, County Clare. He is best known for the rambunctious operas *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, both of which light a fire under an anarchic original. But from vitreous piano miniatures to hallucinogenic orchestral landscapes and touching chamber works, his music never feels far from the stage.

This year, the Berlin Philharmonic will give the first performance of his new Double Bass Concerto (on 2 June), while in 2023 the LA Phil and Southbank Centre will present the postponed premiere of his opera based on another of Wilde's plays, the black and glittering melodrama *Salome*. Barry wrote *What the Webb Telescope Saw* for the Magdeburg Philharmonic Orchestra, which will also perform *Alice* next year. The opera was first staged in 2020 at London's Royal Opera House in a co-production with Irish National Opera that, due to Covid, never made it to Ireland, and a filmed version was released instead.

FRANCES MARSHALL, GETTY

'As a child I had no one to communicate with except my own imagination,' he says, though it isn't clear which came first: the sense of detachment or the powers of psychological conjuring. Although his father, a ship's radio officer, spent long periods at sea, Barry's boyhood existence on Ireland's rural Atlantic fringe looked inwards, not out. 'I've lived my whole life in a sort of altered state, almost as if things were painted too brightly,' he says. 'My music is true to my body in that sense. The way I am isn't something you set out to be; it's just the way it goes.'

> 'I've lived my whole life almost as if things were painted too brightly. My music reflects that'

His life as a musician began when, as a young teenager, he arrived in front of the parish church harmonium. 'Because I started on my own, without formal teaching, I had no idea that music could be graded, that it could be good or bad,' he explains. 'I didn't know that the scales in my book were any different from Mozart, really. I had, and

still have, the same feeling for an arpeggio as for a haunting passage of Schubert. Both are imbued with an intensity, an ecstasy, almost.'

Although he doesn't play today, Barry became a professional organist, graduating from a dour Christian Science church in Dublin to studying Sweelinck and Buxtehude with Piet Kee in Amsterdam. He gave recitals of Messiaen and, exposed as a Catholic, was later dismissed in disgrace from a Lutheran church in northern Germany. Barry's music owes a lot to the organ's resplendent ardour, its almost absurd theatricality, and its capacity for reinvention at the flick of a switch. The starring role the instrument has played in his life is reflected in the climax of his 'autobiographical' 2017 Organ Concerto, where the Clarecastle harmonium reappears from the midst of the orchestra and the Angelus bell hurries latecomers to mass. 'Consciously or otherwise, the sounds I heard as a child are part of everything I do, as if my nervous system is bound up with the first music I knew.'

From Amsterdam, Barry continued eastwards and arrived in Cologne, the beating heart of the European musical avant-garde. 'It was a wonderful place to be in the mid-'70s, partly

Where to start?

Three of Barry's works

String Quartet No. 4, 'First Sorrow' *(2006-07)*
Listen for the tune played simultaneously on two violins, one a tiny fraction sharper than the other. The result is a sound that burns with longing, like a vivid but distant memory – perhaps of a harmonium in a rural Irish church. Fast, loud arcs of joyous music follow before two high voices enter as if from within. Like much of Barry's music, 'First Sorrow' ends with a twinkle in its eye.

Hard D *(1995)*
Barry's years in Amsterdam and the music of Louis Andriessen resonate through this warm and supple score for woodwind, brass, piano and double bass. Its fuzzy saxophones and pugnacious trumpets skip along, missing beats as they please – more Joycean jig than cool continental abstraction.

'I feel bound to tell you' (Act I) from *The Importance of Being Earnest* *(2010)*
The bass-baritone Lady Bracknell, perhaps Barry's best-known character, is at her gruffest here as she gives Algernon an imperious grilling. This short scene is an introduction to the unique vocal writing and cubist word setting that make Barry's operas so idiosyncratic and engaging.

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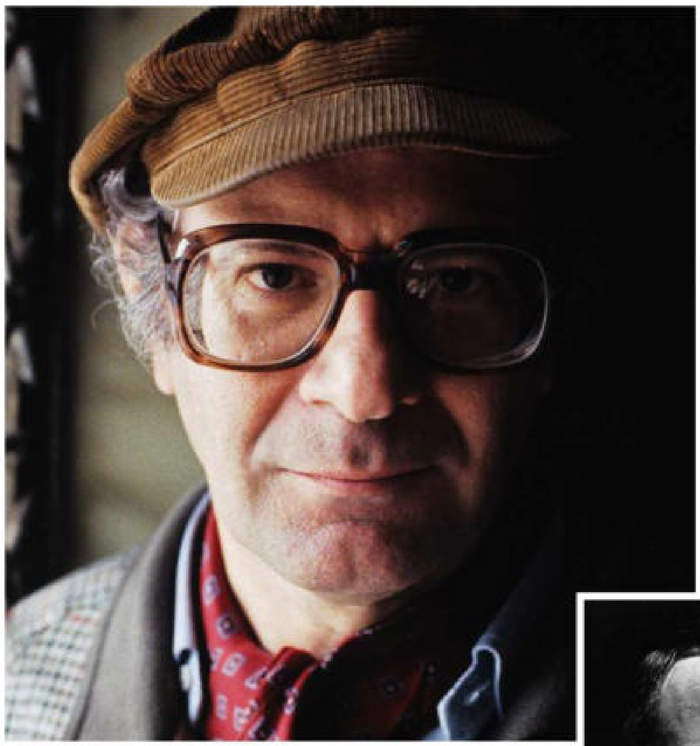

Masterful mentors: (left) Mauricio Kagel and (below left) Karlheinz Stockhausen; (far left) Alan Ewing as Lady Bracknell and Paul Curievici as John Worthing in *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the Royal Opera House

because you were aware people there were working at a very high level,' he says. The city's reputation as a crucible of the outrageous rested to some extent on the presence of the two composers with whom Barry would study: Karlheinz Stockhausen and Mauricio Kagel. 'Stockhausen's classes were all about him, and he'd go on about himself in the third person, but still you could learn by osmosis,' Barry explains. 'The only meaningful personal contact I had with him, a real moment of humanity, was when he wrote an affidavit for a case I brought against a critic. I was very young and realised it was a mistake as soon as I embarked on it. Still, I won!'

> 'I wanted to write music that was like looking at a constantly changing landscape'

An Argentinian émigré who studied literature with Borges and combined writing music with making films, Kagel is less well known in the UK. His absurdist adventures in music theatre helped shape the direction of opera through the late 20th century and beyond – just listen to Barry's distinctively disjointed word-setting to hear his ghost at work. 'Kagel was much easier to relate to than Stockhausen, and he was funnier, too,' Barry says. 'Stockhausen's music is so often magnificent but when he thinks he's being very funny it's actually just incredibly hammy. Someone once said that if you wanted a success in Cologne you should have Kagel in the audience because he had a laugh like an elephant. But his was still what you'd call *Biertisch-humor.*' Barry's assessment is corroborated by the percussion line-up for Kagel's masterpiece, *Staatstheater*. It features, among other things, a potty, a bin bag and a device listed in German as a *Klistierspritze*, the nature of which a quick Google will reveal.

'Gerald Barry is always sober, but might as well always be drunk,' Kagel wrote of his student. Barry, on his part, says of his teacher: 'He was more German than the Germans, and could be maniacally fixated on doing things correctly. After a while I thought I'd prefer not to see every idea through to the end – not quite two fingers at the German way of doing things, but I wanted to write music that was like looking through a window at a landscape that's constantly changing.'

The solution, which he calls 'non sequitur' music, helped drive him towards opera. 'Because of the drama and the characters, people are constantly talking about different things, so that kind of explosion, or implosion, tends to happen of its own accord,' he says. *The Intelligence Park* (1981-88), Barry's first opera, explores the sexual fantasies of a composer and his wife in 18th-century Dublin as the pair become obsessed with a glamorous castrato. Next came *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit* (1991-92), an upending of an opera by Handel, then *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (2005) and *La Plus Forte* (2007). These were followed by *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2010) and *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* (2014-15), both of which receive regular repeat performances – a distinction rare in contemporary opera.

'People asked me what I could possibly add to something as perfect as *The Importance of Being Earnest*,' Barry says. 'They were wrong – Wilde isn't perfect. Sometimes he trips up, and the humour is too of its time.' Barry cut two thirds of the original and gave *Salome* a similarly enthusiastic slashing for his new opera. 'Once you get rid of all the purpleness it becomes, like Earnest did, a lot like Samuel Beckett. Wilde is the essence of surrealism, so it isn't really a surprise. It's all part of a continuing line of Irish literature.'

But the reworking doesn't stop there. 'During Salome's Dance of the Seven Veils I have to look away, as I always do when there's dancing in an opera. Immediately I thought she could type it instead, so in my work Salome is a typist who really functions through her typewriter.' And John the Baptist? 'I've kept his part in the original French. He's a sort of dandy, but he doesn't lose his head – not because they don't want to chop it off; they just sort of forget!'

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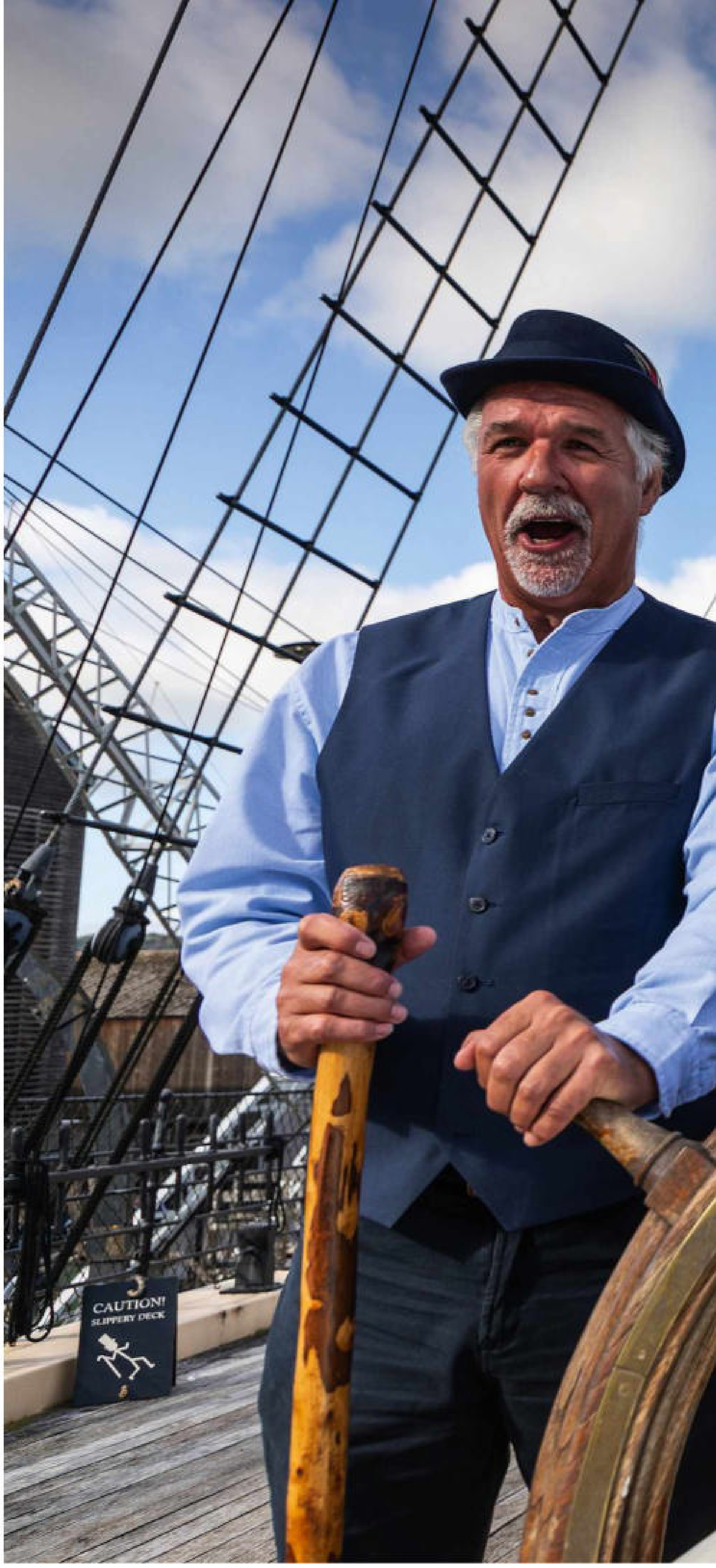
All aboard!

Once sung by sailors out at sea, shanties took the world by storm during the darkest days of lockdown. Freya Parr investigates this surprising resurgence

PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMES CHEADLE



Nathan Evans probably didn't expect a 19th-century whaling song would make him famous. In December 2020, the UK was in yet another lockdown and we were all stuck at home scrolling on our phones. One video stood out. In just over a week, Evans's rendition of 'Wellerman' had gone viral, he had quit his job as a postman and was appearing on radio stations and TV channels across the world. Singers and musicians across the internet were creating TikTok duets, adding accompaniments and harmonies. Even Brian May and Andrew Lloyd Webber joined in.

'I ended up getting a manager, a lawyer, an accountant and a record label within a week,' says Evans. His original video gained over 19 million views and has earned him a recording contract, a book deal and a Brit nomination for Song of the Year. Two-hundred years after their heyday, sea shanties are enjoying mainstream global success. They proved to be the perfect antidote to the cabin fever we were all experiencing. 'These songs were designed to keep morale high on boats,' Evans explains. 'Everyone enjoyed being able to sing along, stamp their feet and clap their hands.'

Eager to learn more about shanties, many people turned to streaming platforms to find 'Wellerman' and were met with limited options. Bristolian folk band The Longest Johns secured the market, as their 2018 recording of 'Wellerman' was one of the best on offer. Several million plays and an entry into the UK Top 40 later, The Longest Johns were signed to Decca.

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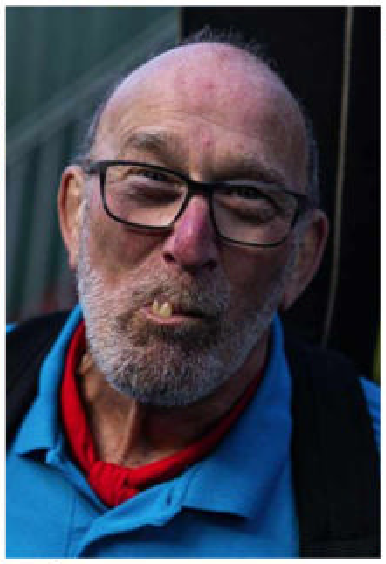
> 'Shanties are passed down via word of mouth, so it's only the catchiest parts of the song that get remembered'

It felt like everyone was suddenly talking about shanties. In fact, Google reported that in the month of Evans's TikTok release, the term 'sea shanty' had been searched more than in any time in the search engine's history.

What was it about this unique folk tradition that captivated us all? 'Shanties are passed down through the generations via word of mouth, so it's only the catchiest parts of the song that get remembered,' says Robbie Sattin from The Longest Johns. 'When you listen to songs like "Santiana" or "Haul Away Joe", you're actually listening to the interpretation of what hundreds and hundreds of different people remembered.' That's why shanties are so easy to learn. You'd be hard pressed to sit through a rendition of 'John



All hands on deck: (clockwise, from top) Batten Down the Hatches aboard the *SS Great Britain*; a toothy member of The Harry Browns; High and Dry, the brains behind Bristol's newly launched Sea Shanty Festival

Kanaka' without picking up the tune, thanks to the relentless call and response between the 'shantyman' and the rest of the crew.

As with much folk music, the origins of shanty singing are doubtful and often hotly debated among historians, academics and the singers themselves. Although these days a shanty is considered to be any kind of nautical song

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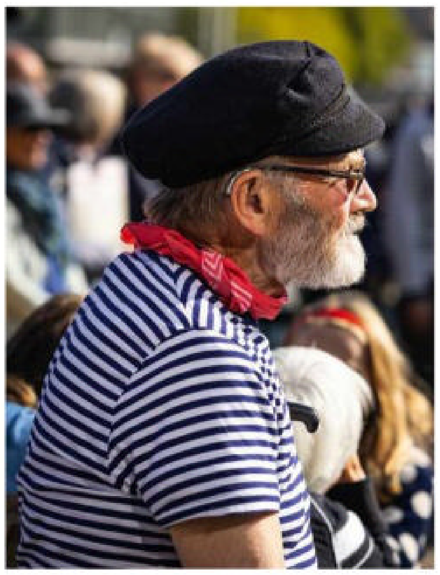
Blue sky thinking: (clockwise, from below) The Severn Whalers; The Harry Browns; The Roaring Trowmen

based around themes of the sea, this was not always the case. Historically, only sailors' work songs would be classified as shanties. 'The core definition of a shanty is a song that used specific rhythms and was created for a specific job,' says The Longest Johns member Andy Yates.

Shanties are divided into capstan and halyard songs, used for heaving (pushing) and hauling (pulling) respectively. Heaving the capstan was an arduous, labour-intensive job, so the shanties sung here were usually longer, more rhythmic and with more of a storytelling element. Halyard shanties were used to keep men in time while pulling ropes or undertaking tasks which required breaks. 'If we're going on technical terms, "Wellerman" isn't a sea shanty – it's a folk song,' Yates explains. 'It wasn't used on boats as a work song during the 18th century. It was a maritime song used for recreational purposes.'

That said, The Longest Johns aren't evangelical about this. They're simply in it to have a good time and sing sea songs together. 'Probably only about a third of our repertoire would technically be defined as a shanty,' they confess. 'It doesn't matter, though. It's all about joining in and the fun that can be had.'

Today, there are hundreds of shanty crews spread across the UK, all interpreting the



> Probably only a third of our repertoire would be defined as a shanty. It's all about joining in and having fun

genre slightly differently. Following the viral #SeaShantyTikTok trend, the city of Bristol launched its inaugural Sea Shanty Festival, bringing together ten of the best shanty crews from the southwest for a day of singing around its historic harbour. While there might be similarities between the groups, there's certainly not a one-size-fits-all approach to shanty singing. Batten Down the Hatches was one of the festival's smallest groups, with three bearded men dressed in authentic handmade historic dress. While they performed on board the *SS Great Britain*, around the corner were The Harry Browns, who believe themselves to be one of the UK's most longstanding shanty crews. Their approach is rather different, with men and women bedecked in matching polo t-shirts – even accompanied by a fiddle player.

The decision to add harmonies and instruments seems to be a major point of division for shanty groups today. Batten Down the Hatches decided to stick to a more 'authentic' approach. 'These work songs served a purpose, so we can't imagine they were sung in four-part harmony,' they explain. 'Most of the time they'd have been grunted, because hauling's hard work.' But there's no animosity or judgment towards the groups doing it differently.

A staunch champion: Alan Lomax

Shanty pioneers

Three leading collectors

Stan Hugill (1906-92)
Known as 'The Last Shantyman', Hugill hailed from Merseyside, the epicentre of England's shanty tradition. He spent 23 years at sea, including a stint as the shantyman on the final voyage of *Garthpool*, Britain's last commercial sailing ship. After retiring in 1945, he transcribed and recorded the shanties he had learnt at sea. He also penned several books on shanties, which remain a go-to resource for singers today.

Alan Lomax (1915-2002)
'What Enrico Caruso was to singing, Alan Lomax is to musicology,' said oral historian Studs Terkel in 1997. A staunch advocate for the protection of folk music, Lomax collected and recorded songs, particularly from the African-American music traditions. In 1935, he travelled with folklorist Mary Elizabeth Barnicle to record work songs and interview sponge fishermen on Andros Island in the Bahamas, continuing that work across the Caribbean and West Indies.

C Fox Smith (1882-1954)
A leading nautical poet of the early 20th century, Cicely Fox Smith also collected shanties, publishing a book which included 'Whiskey Johnny' and 'Blow the Man Down'.

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Go on, give us a wave: Barrett's Privateers on the deck of the *SS Great Britain*

'The good thing about the shanty scene is the diversity. Groups like us keep it simple with pure, powerful vocals, but there are others that add in interesting harmonies. If we all did the same, it'd be blinkin' boring.' Nathan Evans has experimented with the format more than most. What would 19th-century sailors have made of his 'Wellerman' dance remix, complete with synthesised drumbeats and heavy bassline?

This isn't the first time shanties have enjoyed a renaissance. In 2010, a shanty crew from Port Isaac known as the Fisherman's Friends signed a million-pound recording contract with Universal Records. While they kept their day jobs as fishermen in Cornwall, they toured the country and even performed on the Pyramid Stage at Glastonbury. Their story was later made into a feature film, the sequel of which is due to arrive in cinemas this April. Shanties have even managed to infiltrate the world of video games, with 'Leave Her, Johnny' and 'Running Down to Cuba' taking centre stage in *Assassin's Creed: Black Flag*. This trend has been harnessed by The Longest Johns, who host regular livestreams of themselves playing *Sea of Thieves,* a video game set on a pirate ship. They communicate with other players via headsets, singing shanties as they go.

In the concert hall, songs of the sea are no stranger to audiences. Every year, the Last Night of the Proms is punctuated by Henry Wood's *Fantasia on British Sea Songs,* a medley of maritime music written in 1905 to mark the centenary of the Battle of Trafalgar. When Wood wrote his *Fantasia*, many of the folk songs were collected by the likes of Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth and Cecil Sharp. Today, shanty singers rely on different methods to find new music. 'In the folk music world, you don't steal songs – you collect them,' says Bryn Stephens of The Roaring Trowmen. 'We find songs on YouTube and hear them at festivals and then perform them ourselves.' Others will turn to lively internet forums or history books to find new material. 'The collections of Cicely Fox Smith are a really good resource,' says Helen Stanley, fiddle player for The Harry Browns. 'As well as writing her own maritime poems, she travelled around the world collecting sea poems and stories which were later set to music.'

Whether you're in a rowdy Cornish pub on a Saturday night or at one of the UK's major shanty festivals, it's impossible to not be swept up in the joy of shanty singing. 'For us, it's as much a social thing as a musical thing,' say High and Dry, a shanty group based in the Mendip Hills who spearheaded the launch of Bristol's shanty festival. For The Harry Browns, the ethos is equally simple. 'We'll sing wherever there is beer. Ultimately, it all comes down to beer.'

After the last two years of lockdowns and social distancing, there's something wonderfully comforting about being able to get together, have a beer and sing a few songs that have been sung for generations. Shanties aren't supposed to sit in books, untouched. They deserve to be roared at the top of singers' lungs, while feet are stamped and tankards of beer are banged repeatedly against wooden tables. Or, perhaps, shared across the internet with a guitar duet from Brian May.

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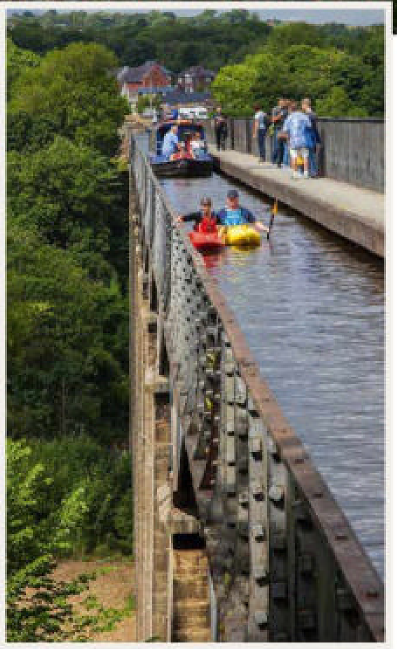
MUSICAL DESTINATIONS

Llangollen Wales

Jeremy Pound visits the home of the International Musical Eisteddfod, a festival first set up to engender a spirit of global peace and harmony

Colourful heights: Luke Jerram's patchwork adorns Llangollen Bridge, 2021; (below) Pontcysyllte Aqueduct; (above right) Prince Charles meets competitors in 2015



Should you be planning to drive to Llangollen, do make sure you leave enough time. Whether you're coming from Wrexham or Chirk in the east, or Snowdonia in the west, the roads are of the sinuous, single-carriageway sort to make haring along at pace highly inadvisable. But equally pertinently, as the River Dee snakes its way alongside you through the north Welsh hills, you'll want to be able to take in the scenery. This is a very eye-catching part of the world.

Every July, thousands of music lovers make this very journey as they head towards the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod (LIME), held on a large site just outside town. And, as the name of the event implies, they don't come just from Wales or even the UK, but from right across the globe. A fair number come to compete – an essential component of any eisteddfod – but many are here just to enjoy the sights and sounds of one of the world's biggest and best-known celebrations of music making.

Llangollen's International Eisteddfod took the long view right from its first outing in 1947. To raise spirits after the Second

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Famous visitor
Luciano Pavarotti

In July 1955, the male-voice Corale Rossini from Modena, Italy, won first prize at the International Eisteddfod, helped by the powerful voices of baker Fernando Pavarotti and his 19-year-old son, Luciano (above). As he later recalled, so inspired by the experience was Pavarotti Jnr that it made up his mind to devote his life to singing. In 1995, the now world-famous tenor returned to Llangollen to sing the closing concert, and the Choir of the Year trophy bears his name. After his death in 2007, recordings of the Corale Rossini's 1955 performance were discovered in the Eisteddfod archives.

World War and to promote a message of peace and harmony, public funds were raised to stage a festival in which choirs from home and abroad were invited to compete before the weekend was rounded off with a concert. Despite the challenges of travel at the time, ten overseas choirs and 40 from the UK made the journey, with choirs from Portugal and Hungary emerging as winners of the women's and men's competitions respectively.

The Sunday concert, meanwhile, was performed by the Hallé Orchestra under John Barbirolli. Big-name international performers have been a feature ever since – those to have graced the stage here include soprano Joan Sutherland, violinist Yehudi Menuhin and tenors José Carreras and, making his first professional appearance in the UK in 1968, Plácido Domingo.

As it prepares to celebrate its 75th anniversary, the combination of competition and concerts remains at the heart of LIME. Its main stage is in the impressive Royal International Pavilion, effectively a giant permanent marquee – complete with fabric roof – that seats 1,500. Today, the competitions range from vocal solo, dance and instrumental to several amateur choral categories, the winners of which compete against each other on the final day to lift the Pavarotti Trophy as Choir of the Year. The field of entrants is as multi-national as ever – in 2019, the last live event before lockdown, the finalists included ensembles from the US and Thailand, as well as Wales itself.

'The International Eisteddfod has stayed pretty true to its roots,' says Camilla King, who took over as executive producer in November. 'It's really a lovely twist on the Welsh tradition of eisteddfodau – while the National Eisteddfod is all about Welsh culture and language, the International one has people from all over the world showcasing their talents in friendly competition. Where people will notice a difference in 2022, however, is that we are re-vamping the surrounding outdoor site to give it much more of a sense of a contemporary greenfield festival. As well as music, there will be talks, comedy, theatrical performances, food and drink.'

> The town centre is pretty, with the Dee cascading alongside the railway station

Visitors to the Eisteddfod will also want to spend time admiring Llangollen itself. With steam trains puffing in and out of the station and the Dee cascading alongside it, the town centre is pretty enough – but even more so last year when, at the instigation of LIME, Llangollen Bridge was bedecked in a giant fabric patchwork designed by artist Luke Jerram. With fine pubs and tea shops, it's a great place to take a wander.

Just above the town is the Llangollen Canal. For the more adventurous, perhaps this is the ideal way to get here, either by boat or by foot along the towpath. Start at, say, Froncysyllte, five miles to the east, and you will soon enjoy the thrill of crossing the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. At 38 metres tall, this 1805 masterpiece by engineers Thomas Telford and William Jessop is the highest canal aqueduct in the world and, should you have a head for such things, provides superb views over the Dee valley. Telford, meanwhile, is also responsible for another piece of engineering brilliance should you instead begin your approach from the canal's endpoint a couple of miles west of Llangollen: here you will find the Horseshoe Falls, a stunning semi-circular weir designed to feed the man-made waterway from the river.

Whether coming from east or west, either the foot or boat option is, admittedly, a lot slower than by car, so you will have to allow for the necessary hours in your schedule. However, as we have already established, this focal point of music, peace and international harmony really is no place to be rushing around.

Further info: Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod: **international-eisteddfod.co.uk**

Rebecca Clarke

Equally accomplished as a performer and composer, Clarke took many by surprise with her finest masterpiece, as *Leah Broad* explains

ILLUSTRATION: MATT HERRING

America's musical press in 1919 was awash with rumours about a new work – Rebecca Clarke's Viola Sonata. It had just tied for first place in the prestigious Berkshire Festival Chamber Music Competition, for which all entries had to be submitted anonymously. The jurors had speculated that the Sonata had been written by Ravel. When Clarke was revealed as the composer, they were astonished. 'You *should* have seen their faces when they saw it was by a woman,' the Festival's patron confided to Clarke. The Sonata was hailed in the press as a work of 'greatest genius', compared favourably to pieces by Debussy.

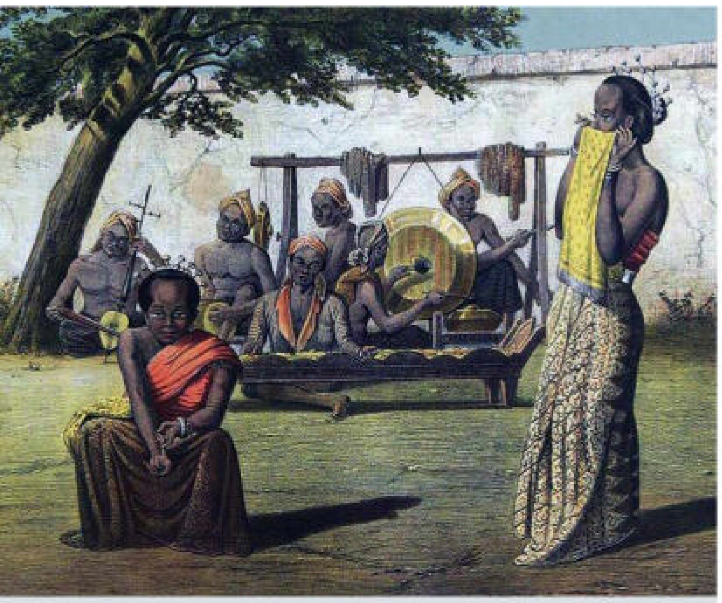
The Sonata has remained one of Clarke's best-known works and is now a staple of the viola repertoire. It also spearheaded the 'rediscovery' of her music in the 1980s. Although famous in her day, by the time Clarke died in 1979 very few people knew she had ever been a composer at all. She was sometimes mentioned in the same breath as her husband, the pianist James Friskin. The difference between her standing at the end of her life and at the height of her career is staggering. Her entry in the 1980 *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* read, in its entirety, 'See James Friskin'. But in 1927, her entry in the same dictionary had been extensive, listing all her major works including the Sonata, her Piano Trio (1921) and Cello Rhapsody (1923) and a substantial quantity of songs. Like so many women composers, Clarke's music was slowly excised from the historical record and is only now reclaiming a place in concert halls.

Born in 1886 in Harrow, northwest of London, Clarke had a difficult childhood. She was extremely close with her mother, Agnes, but had a strained and complex relationship with her father, Joseph. In the memoir Clarke wrote in her eighties, she recalled that Joseph would beat all of his four children, 'sometimes really painfully'. Needless to say, when Joseph instructed his daughter to take up an instrument, she did not take to it immediately. Like many middle-class fathers of his generation, Joseph wanted to nurture family music-making, being an amateur cellist himself. When they were old enough, his children were given violin lessons – Rebecca, being 'only a girl', was sent to her brother Hans's violin lessons rather than being taught individually. She hated playing the violin, and there were no indications that she would have any kind of musical career.

Despite this inauspicious start, as a teenager Clarke developed a real appreciation for the music her father forced her to play. In music, she found an escape from her family life. At 16, with her mother accompanying her at the piano, she auditioned for the Royal Academy of Music, securing herself a place as a violin student. After just two years, however, her father removed her from the Academy after her harmony teacher proposed to her. She later attended the Royal College of Music, where she was taught composition by Charles Stanford. All her life she

When composing at her best, Clarke felt 'flooded with a wonderful feeling of power'

BBC RADIO 3 90–93FM **Composer of the Week** is broadcast on Radio 3 at 12pm, Monday to Friday. Programmes in April are:
28 March – 1 April Biber
4-8 April Elmer Bernstein
11-15 April Haydn
18-22 April One-Hit Wonders
25-29 April Brahms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Clarke's style

Modernism: Well into the 1920s there was little consensus about what 'modernist' music was or should be. Clarke was one of the composers experimenting with different directions for new music, writing pieces that incorporated an array of styles including impressionism and neo-classicism.

Orientalism: Clarke was composing during a British vogue for Chinoiserie, and many of her works can be considered musical Chinoiserie. More generally, she often used sonorities inspired by the Indonesian gamelan (above).

French influence: Harmonically, Clarke's work is closely aligned with the music of such composers as Ravel and Debussy, and critics with some justification often compared her to them in her lifetime.

English heritage: Like her friend and contemporary Vaughan Williams, Clarke included historical English music among her influences, ranging from 16th-century Tudor polyphony to folk music.

REBECCA CLARKE Life & Times

1886

LIFE: Rebecca Clarke is born in Harrow on 27 August to a German mother and an American father. She begins on ***violin***, sharing lessons with her younger brother.

TIMES: Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is published in the US, then shortly after in the UK. After a positive review in *The Times*, it becomes a major bestseller.

1919

LIFE: Her Viola Sonata ties for first place in the Berkshire Festival Chamber Music Competition, though loses out to a suite by ***Ernest Bloch*** when a casting vote is made by competition patron Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge.

TIMES: The 18th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which bans the production, import and transport of alcoholic drinks, is ratified, introducing the era of Prohibition the following year.

1927

LIFE: Performing and recording as both a viola soloist and ensemble player, she founds The English Ensemble alongside violinist Marjorie Hayward, pianist Kathleen Long and cellist May Mukle.

TIMES: ***Leon Trotsky*** is expelled from the Soviet Communist Party. Banished soon after to Kazakhstan, he is exiled from the Soviet Union completely the following year, eventually settling in Mexico.

1933

LIFE: She makes the last of several revisions to 'The Tiger'. This darkly tempestuous song setting of William Blake possibly reflects her romantic involvement with the baritone John Goss.

TIMES: Two weeks into his presidency, Franklin D Roosevelt gives the first of his 'Fireside Chats', a series of evening radio broadcasts in which he addresses Americans about current issues.

1944

LIFE: She marries the composer and pianist ***James Friskin***, a former fellow student from the Royal College of Music, whom she has encountered by chance in Manhattan earlier that year.

TIMES: On D-Day, more than 155,000 Allied troops land on the beaches of Normandy, setting in motion Operation Overlord to invade and liberate German-occupied western Europe.

1979

LIFE: Having spent most of her life in the US, Clarke dies in New York City on 13 October. She composed little in her last three decades, but made arrangements of earlier works.

TIMES: ***Margaret Thatcher*** becomes the UK's first ever woman prime minister, the Conservative Party having won a 44-seat majority in the House of Commons.

Playing her part: (clockwise, from right) a Wigmore Hall poster for Rebecca Clarke plus regular partners, 1925; Clarke reveals another talent, Harrow, 1905; Ravel, a major inspiration

viewed her studies at the College as 'a happy time, an ecstatic time', and under Stanford's tutelage she developed a distinctive compositional voice. When she was composing at her best, Clarke felt 'flooded with a wonderful feeling of potential power – a miracle that made anything seem possible'.

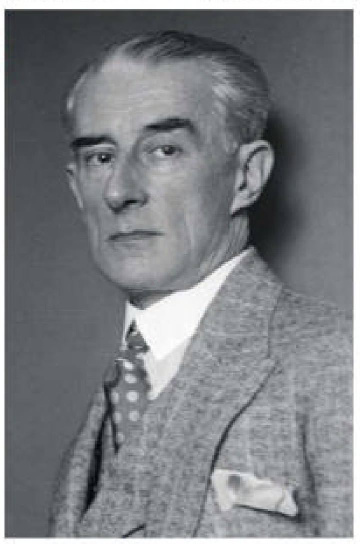
While at the RCM, Clarke transferred from violin to viola, and became a famous performer and internationally recognised chamber musician on that instrument. In 1913 she became one of the first six women to be hired into a professional orchestra, the Queen's Hall Orchestra, under the direction of Sir Henry Wood. In the early 1920s she toured through Asia, broadcast regularly on the fledgling BBC and later formed an all-woman piano quartet called

Reviewers considered Clarke one of the modernist group that included Ravel

The English Ensemble, with whom she performed internationally.

Being a performer was vital to Clarke's success as a composer. As she herself observed, some players showed a 'prejudice against women's compositions', making it difficult for many women to get their works performed. Clarke, however, was able to play her own works with friends and colleagues – all performers of international standing – who made up her regular chamber ensembles. She gave the New York and London premieres of the Viola Sonata herself; similarly, her Cello Rhapsody was premiered by her close friends pianist Dame Myra Hess and cellist May Mukle, who were also the instrumentalists for the premiere of Clarke's Piano Trio, with Marjorie Hayward on violin.

Clarke wrote her early works in the 1910s and '20s, when London was a melting pot of musical influences, full of conflicting ideas about what 'modern' music should sound like. Working alongside composers like Ravel (Clarke played at his London concerts during his 1928 visit) and Vaughan Williams (who was a



close friend and conducted for a Palestrina Society that Clarke co-founded), Clarke's music was similarly occupied with all the latest musical ideas. Her Trio, for example, opens with a fiery, violent blaze of dissonance that gives way to a menacing theme ground out on the cello – tension never drops for a single second. Reviewers hailed her as a 'frank disciple of modernity', considering Clarke one of the international modernist group that included not only figures like Ravel, but also names that have since fallen into comparative obscurity, like Ernest Bloch and Bernard van Dieren. Their music was as much part of Clarke's musical world as Debussy and Stravinsky, alongside English composers such as Arnold Bax and Frank Bridge.

Clarke was also pioneering in her programming, often pairing contemporary music with 17th-century works, in keeping with the modernist fascination with early music. Her contemporary Peter Warlock put together similar programmes that juxtaposed and complemented old and new, as would Michael Tippett and Benjamin Britten after her. This interest in early music shines through in Clarke's work, most noticeably in her *Passacaglia on an Old English Tune* (1941), built on a melody by Thomas Tallis. Folk music was another source of inspiration, surfacing in her *Three Old English Songs* (1924) and *Three Irish Country Songs* (1926), both for violin and voice. So, too, was the Romantic repertoire that Clarke grew up performing; shades of Dvořák can be heard in her concert work *Dumka* for violin, viola and piano, and Rachmaninov in both the *Passacaglia* and *I'll Bid My Heart Be Still* (1944), written for James Friskin and based on a Scottish folk tune.

The single most enduring connection in Clarke's music, though, is with the French school. It's no surprise, in some sense, that judges assumed her anonymous work to be by Ravel. They share a similar approach to harmony, form and melody. And like Debussy before her, Clarke was captivated by the sound of the Indonesian gamelan when she heard it played at the 1900 World Fair in Paris. Her work is steeped in the Orientalist sound so beloved by turn-of-the-century French modernists, saturating her viola works like *Morpheus* (1916), *Midsummer Moon* (1924) and, of course, the Sonata. Unusually among composers of her generation, Clarke travelled to the countries whose music inspired her – Indonesia was among the countries she visited on her 1922-1923 performance tour, and her 1919 song 'Down by the Salley Gardens' was penned while in Hawaii, perhaps attempting to emulate the sound of the Chinese musicians she heard performing there.

It's clear from all of Clarke's music that she was a consummate performer; her works have a theatricality that really relishes and showcases the physicality of music-making. Nowhere is this more apparent than in her song 'The Seal Man' (1922), telling the story of a young woman who drowns in the ocean trying to follow her lover. Both piano and vocal part are unashamedly dramatic, the singer alternating between sung and semi-spoken passages to differentiate between the individual characters in the song. And the piano part is virtuosic to the extent that it always threatens, like the sea, to overwhelm and overpower the vocalist. Singer and pianist have to be perfectly attuned to make this song work convincingly, creating an experience that can be truly electrifying in live performance.

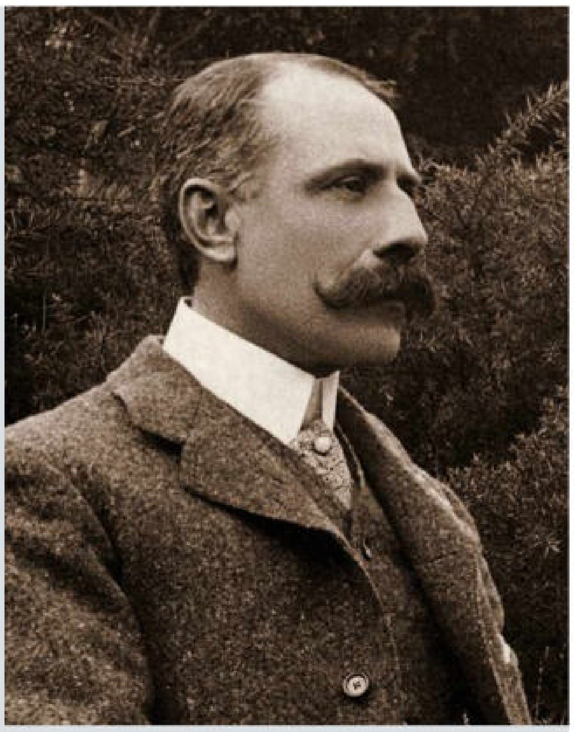
Clarke is now established as one of the most important 'women composers' of her generation – but as she sternly told a journalist, 'I would sooner be regarded as a 16th-rate composer than be judged as if there were one kind of musical art for men and another for women'. Gender prejudice during Clarke's own lifetime pushed her out of the limelight, but her outstanding works should surely guarantee her a position as one of the most important musicians of her generation: a modernist composer, international performer and pioneer of viola composition.

Excerpts from Rebecca Clarke's memoir 'I Had a Father Too, or The Mustard Spoon' used by permission.

WWW.REBECCACLARKE.ORG, GETTY

Edward Elgar
The Dream of Gerontius

Mikel Toms searches out the best recordings of a dramatic oratorio that revolutionised British choral music and won many admirers abroad



The composer

International fame and, with it, financial security came late for Elgar – he was 42 years old when his *Enigma Variations* and, then, *The Dream of Gerontius* brought him international recognition at the turn of the 20th century. Born and bred in Worcestershire, he forged his early career there and became celebrated in local music circles but, as he ruefully wrote to a friend in 1884, was perpetually penniless. Moving to London to enhance his prospects in the early 1890s brought only unhappiness and little change of fortune, and he and his wife Alice soon returned to his home county.

Building a Library is broadcast on Radio 3 at 9.30am each Saturday as part of *Record Review*. A highlights podcast is available on BBC Sounds.

The work

In 1900, Edward Elgar was flushed with the success of the *Enigma Variations*, premiered just one year earlier. After years of musical struggle, things were looking up for this jobbing, provincial violin teacher. Over the course of the previous decade, he had produced a series of well received, large-scale choral works, including *Caractacus* and *The Light of Life*, and when the Birmingham Music Festival approached him to write a new choral work, he had already made his mark as one of the most respected of emerging British composers. *The Dream of Gerontius*, however, would propel him to international fame and is now widely considered to be his masterpiece, arguably the greatest work of English choral music ever written.

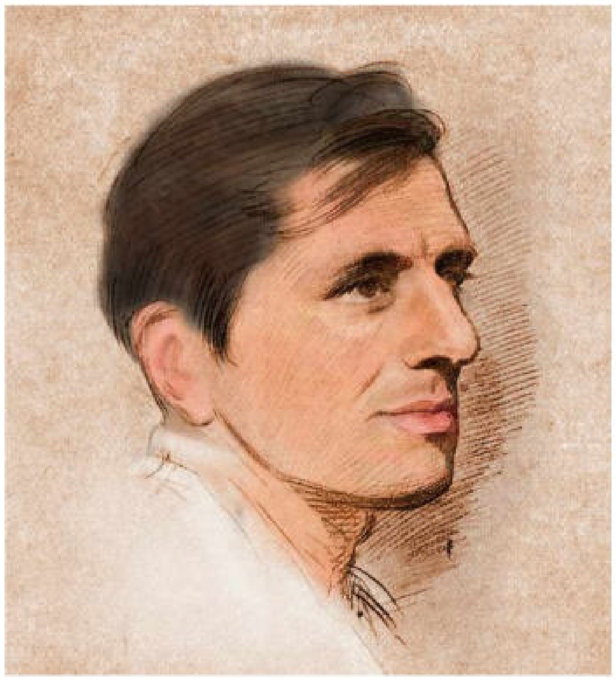
Like the death of the eponymous Gerontius, *The Dream*'s birth was no straightforward matter. Elgar had owned a copy of Cardinal Newman's 1865 poem *The Dream of Gerontius* for a number of years and had long toyed with the idea of setting it to music. The poem was a huge success when it was first published, but by the time Elgar came to set it its popularity had waned and its overtly Catholic take on the afterlife would have ruffled not a few Anglican feathers.

Elgar composed quickly, largely completing the work at the small cottage he and his wife Alice rented at Birchwood. An idyllic woodland retreat just outside Malvern, Birchwood must surely have coloured his setting of the famous line in which Gerontius compares the sound of the House of Judgement to 'The summer wind among the lofty pines'.

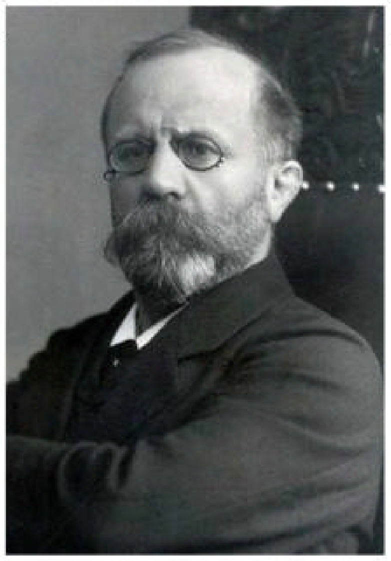
He was composing to a tight deadline, however, and the first performance was plagued by mishaps. The choirmaster, Charles Swinnerton Heap, died shortly after rehearsals began and was replaced by the aging William Stockley, who wasn't equal to the task and who, in any case, didn't try to mask his distaste for the subject matter. Hans Richter, the conductor, only received the full score one day before orchestra rehearsals began and only one of the soloists was in good voice on the day. Although the press generally conceded that a decent work had been presented, it was widely accepted that the first performance had been a disaster.

Although the press generally conceded that it was a decent work, its premiere was a disaster

The German conductor Julius Buths was in the Birmingham audience and recognised that *Gerontius* merited a decent hearing. It was Buths's performances in Düsseldorf in 1901 and '02 that alerted the British musical world to the fact that Elgar had indeed produced something extraordinary. The occasions were a huge success, Elgar was fêted as a hero and was presented with two enormous laurel wreaths which he and Alice somehow managed to lug back to Malvern. Richard Strauss wrote 'I raise my glass to the



A masterpiece redeemed: (clockwise from left) Gerontius with his guardian angel; Cardinal Newman; Elgar and Alice, his wife, at the cottage in Birchwood where he composed *Gerontius*; conductor Julius Buths, who recognised its worth



welfare and success of the first English progressivist, Meister Elgar'. If the Catholic Elgar hadn't arrived before, the Anglican establishment had no choice but to concede that he certainly had done so now.

Part I of *The Dream* portrays the dying moments of Gerontius, whom Elgar thought of as an everyman: a devoutly religious man, but a sinner, not a priest. His friends gather round and pray for him while he begins to experience the sensation of his soul separating from his body. He realises that his final hour has arrived ('Novissima hora est') and a priest sends him on his journey into the afterlife ('Proficiscere, anima Christiana').

In Part II, Gerontius, now simply called the Soul, awakes to find himself in the afterlife and meets his guardian angel who is leading him towards the House of Judgement. They encounter a chorus of demons and then a chorus of angels sings 'Praise to the Holiest in the Height'. The Angel of the Agony intones a prayer of intercession on behalf of the Soul who then sings 'I go before my judge'. Accompanied by one of the most emotionally devastating single chords in the whole repertoire, Gerontius sees God and receives his judgement. The Angel takes him down to Purgatory, promising to return in the morning to lead him to Heaven ('Softly and gently, dearly ransomed soul').

Gerontius isn't an oratorio in the conventional sense. It isn't drawn from a biblical text and is conceived as an uninterrupted drama instead of being divided into separate musical numbers. It has more in common with Wagner than with Mendelssohn or Handel. This was something altogether new, and it's worth remembering that in 1900 this was modern, even shocking music.

Gerontius established Elgar as the leading British composer of his day but its Catholic depiction of Purgatory and its invocations of the Virgin Mary also underscored his outsider status. Few, though, would argue with Elgar's own assessment, appropriating John Ruskin's celebrated quotation, that *The Dream of Gerontius* represented the 'best of me'.

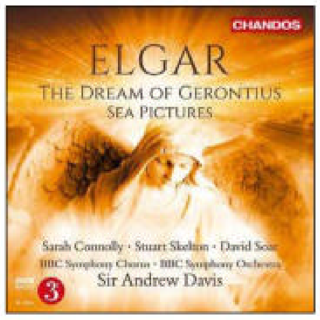
Turn the page to discover the recommended recordings of Elgar's The Dream of Gerontius

ALAMY, GETTY, ELGAR BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM

A lifetime's passion: Andrew Davis has a cast of top-flight soloists

An ideal blend of heart and detail

The best recording



Andrew Davis *(conductor)*

Stuart Skelton (tenor), Sarah Connolly (mezzo), David Soar (bass); BBC Symphony Chorus & Orchestra *Chandos CHSA5140(2)*

Andrew Davis first heard *The Dream of Gerontius* when he was 14 years old, and this 2014 recording is an eloquent testament to a lifetime spent absorbing and processing this musically and emotionally complex work. Each nuance of Elgar's score is respected, the playing by the BBC Symphony Orchestra is flawless and Davis evinces as good a grasp of the work's inner drama as is surely possible.

Elgar made substantial cuts to the poem and his libretto concentrates more on the human experience of Gerontius than on the theological aspects of Newman's original text. In this respect, Stuart Skelton is the ideal protagonist, perfectly carrying forward the psychological drama which leads Gerontius from his deathbed to Judgement and Purgatory. Where others might approach the part in much the same way as they would a more traditional oratorio, Skelton gives a searing, almost *verismo* portrait of a man at times frail, at others defiant, confused, awed, scared or at peace. His 'Sanctus fortis' is an earnest profession of faith, his 'Novissima hora est' is suffused with apprehension and wonderment, and after 'Take me away' we witness a man hollowed out by the judgement of God. He is one of only a very few on record who have the extraordinary tonal range needed for this role.

Stuart Skelton gives a searing, almost *verismo* portrait of Gerontius

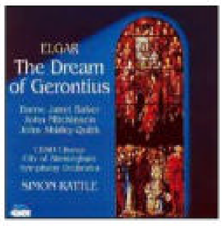
Mezzo Sarah Connolly is pre-eminent as the Angel. Her ruby-red lower register and limpid, warm high notes are used with intelligence and understanding throughout. Like Skelton, she makes sense of the evolving nature of her role: authoritative, reassuring, awe-struck, loving. This is very much a journey undertaken by two beings, not one. David Soar is an authoritative Priest/Angel of the Agony and the BBC Symphony Chorus make resoundingly light work of Elgar's fiendish choral writing.

Three other great recordings

Mark Elder (conductor)
Another remarkable account from another distinguished Elgarian: Mark Elder. The Hallé Choir and Hallé Youth Choir in this 2008 recording create a colourful, virtuosic and secure structure around which the vocal drama unfolds and, again, the beautiful sound engineering allows every detail of Elgar's score to breathe. This recording should be heard for Bryn Terfel's Priest/Angel of the Agony alone, though. His is by far the best performance available on record and he is the only singer who achieves that perfect balance between thundering authority and loving compassion. (*Hallé CDHLD 7520*)

John Barbirolli (conductor)
Considered for decades to be the definitive *Gerontius*, Barbirolli's 1965 release needs to be included on any list of recommended recordings. For many, the role of the Angel is virtually synonymous with Janet Baker's rich and moving performance on this recording, which has become a benchmark for all subsequent performances. The recorded quality is reasonable but modern audiences are spoiled by a choice of technically

superior alternatives and, dare I say it, Barbirolli's reading of the score is just not as accurate as the others listed here. (*Warner Classics 573 5792*)



Simon Rattle (conductor)
Janet Baker's second recording as The Angel conveys all the maturity and depth of someone who has lived and breathed the role for a further two decades. Her voice in this superb 1986 release has a darker and warmer hue and it's a terrific alternative reading. Elgar's skill as an orchestrator often goes unmentioned but Rattle and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra bring out all of the score's colour and textures as careful attention is paid to every last detail. (*Warner Classics 749 5492*)

And one to avoid...

There is much to recommend Daniel Barenboim's 2017 recording. The Staatskapelle Berlin is as virtuosic and warm as you would expect and Catherine Wyn-Rogers is a superb, distinctly human Angel. But while Barenboim guides us capably through the score, the performance lacks the breadth and breathing space of other recordings and it's too easy to lose sight of the fact that this is primarily a vocal work. Not so much one to avoid, perhaps, as one not to listen to first.

The unsung heroes of this recording, though, are the sound engineers. Elgar's score is huge and complex, and however fine the performances on earlier recordings are, most suffer, by today's standards, from inadequate engineering. This recording is one of only a handful in which Elgar's orchestration and vocal writing is afforded the acoustic space and the clarity to be properly heard and, combined with Davis's unhurried performance which allows the drama to unfold on its own terms, gives as good a recorded account of this work as is currently available.

GETTY

Biblically inspired: Caravaggio's *Judith Beheading Holofernes*; (below) Bryn Terfel

Continue the journey...

We suggest five works to explore after Elgar's Dream of Gerontius...

Elgar's success with *Gerontius* led to a commission from the Birmingham Triennial Musical Festival for another large-scale oratorio. Opening with the hauntingly atmospheric chorus 'The Spirit of the Lord', the similarly dramatic ***The Apostles*** tells of the story of Jesus's disciples, from their initial selection to his crucifixion and Ascension. (**Bryn Terfel (baritone, below) et al; London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus/Richard Hickox** *Chandos CHAN8875*).

Elgar's publisher August Jaeger was in the chorus for the premiere of ***Hubert Parry***'s *Judith* in Birmingham in 1888, and Elgar himself was a fan. Depicting the exploits of its eponymous Old Testament heroine – culminating in her beheading of the Assyrian general Holofernes – the oratorio's memorable moments include two dark processional marches and the first appearance of the tune that has since become familiar as 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind'. (**Sarah Fox (soprano) et al; London Mozart Players/William Vann** *Chandos CHSA5268(2)*).

> Parry's *Judith* depicts the exploits of its eponymous Old Testament heroine

Parry's student ***Ralph Vaughan Williams*** is known to have had the score of *The Dream of Gerontius* close to hand as he worked on his *A Sea Symphony*, begun in 1903 and eventually premiered at the Leeds Festival in 1910. The 70-minute work features soloists and a chorus throughout its four movements as it sets texts by US poet Walt Whitman in suitably grandiloquent style. (**Katherine Broderick (soprano) et al; The Hallé/Mark Elder** *Hallé CDHLL7542*).

When Elgar's admirer ***Richard Strauss*** was invited by Heidelberg University to receive an honorary doctorate in 1903, he thanked them by composing and conducting his opulent cantata *Taillefer*. Here, the title character is a servant in the court of William the Conqueror with a beautiful singing voice that earns him his freedom and the invitation to join his former boss as a knight at the Battle of Hastings. (**Gerhard Siegel (tenor) et al; Munich SO/ Hayko Siemens** *Arte Nova G010001699998X*).

Finally, for a more recent setting of texts by Cardinal Newman, try ***Arvo Pärt***'s *Littlemore Tractus*, a life-affirming, hymn-like motet for choir and organ written in 2001 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the great theologian's birth. (**Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir/Paul Hillier** *Harmonia Mundi HMU907401*).

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Reviews

110 CDs, Books & DVDs rated by expert critics

Welcome

I love it when artists are daring, or familiar music is recast. It's not so much a case of reinventing the wheel, but more about exploring the music's possibilities, or making a statement. So this month I was delighted to share Théophile Alexandre's *No(s) Dames* project, which sees the countertenor challenge and deconstruct traditional gender roles in opera. Then there's a pair of Beethoven symphonies reimagined for piano trio – Yo-Yo Ma, Emanuel Ax and Leonidas Kavakos, no less; plus a fresh take on Schubert's chilly *Winterreise* from baritone Benjamin Appl.

Beyond that there are winning recordings of Florence Price chamber works, Bacewicz piano sonatas and a page of recent releases of music written for the big and small screens.

Michael Beek *Reviews editor*

This month's critics

John Allison, Nicholas Anderson, Michael Beek, Terry Blain, Kate Bolton-Porciatti, Garry Booth, Geoff Brown, Michael Church, Christopher Cook, Martin Cotton, Christopher Dingle, Misha Donat, Jessica Duchen, Rebecca Franks, George Hall, Malcolm Hayes, Julian Haylock, Claire Jackson, Daniel Jaffé, Berta Joncus, Erik Levi, Natasha Loges, Andrew McGregor, David Nice, Roger Nichols, Bayan Northcott, Steph Power, Anthony Pryer, Paul Riley, Jan Smaczny, Michael Tanner, Sarah Urwin Jones, Kate Wakeling, Helen Wallace, Alexandra Wilson

KEY TO STAR RATINGS

★★★★★ Outstanding
★★★★ Excellent
★★★ Good
★★ Disappointing
★ Poor

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Elisabeth Leonskaja's pitch-perfect Mozart

David Nice finds himself enlightened and enraptured by the pianist's long overdue recording of the complete sonatas

Mozart

Complete Piano Sonatas: Piano Sonatas Nos 1 in C, K279; 2 in F, K280; 3 in B flat, K281; 4 in E flat, K282; 5 in G, K283; 6 in D, K284; 7 in C, K309; 8 in A minor, K310; 9 in D, K311; 10 in C, K330; 11 in A, K331 'Alla Turca'; 12 in F, K332; 13 in B flat, K333; 14 in C minor, K457; 15 in F, K533; 16 in C, K545; 17 in B flat, K570; 18 in D, K576; Fantasia in C minor, K457;
Elisabeth Leonskaja (piano)
Warner Classics 9029645782
385:33 mins (6 discs)

How many people know all 18 of Mozart's piano sonatas? I certainly didn't, and to follow them carefully in the enlightened company of Elisabeth Leonskaja, surely the wisest of all living pianists, was an honour and a pleasure.

Why has she waited until her mid-seventies to make the odyssey? Part of the answer must lie in what she told me when I interviewed her at the Verbier Festival, where she was playing all of Schubert's sonatas for the first time and we were speaking of ideal tempos, ideal space. 'In Mozart, actually, it's really impossible to reach that point. With Schubert, you sometimes have the feeling that you're there, but with Mozart, never.' That echoes what her great mentor and friend Sviatoslav Richter wrote in his journal: 'What is it about Mozart? Is there a pianist in the world who really manages to play him well?'

This set surely gives an affirmative answer. As we move from the relatively simple charms of an exceptional composer in his late teens (the set of six, K279-84) through experimentation and greatness to the last sonata, necessarily simple to suit a young princess but so perfect and at one with the world, the lucidity,

Made for Mozart: Elisabeth Leonskaja dazzles in her complete sonatas recording

MARCO BORGGREVE

articulation and colouring are always a joy, and have a perfect recording to match. You register the delight Mozart shows in ringing decorative changes on rococo tropes, the ambition of placing an *Adagio* first, for the E flat Sonata K282, where Leonskaja reaches for the pure tender essence, and of ending the set with a Theme and Variations (the seemingly effortlessness continuity, one variation flowing into another, is breathtaking). Not so very much later, chronologically speaking, Mozart's powerhouse of ideas in the opening movement of K309 has irresistible forward movement but never anything overdriven; Leonskaja always treads the tightrope between prettiness and excessive emphases.

It's not necessarily true that simply using a minor key reflects pathos, or even – as Cliff Eisen suggests in very well-written notes, which don't always hit on what I found most significant as I listened – roots in a personal loss. If anything, Leonskaja goes deeper in minor episodes as part of a bigger context. But there's no doubt of the profundity or the abyss that opens up beneath graceful ideas when we reach the C minor Sonata K457 of 1784 and the even more remarkable Fantasia in the same key of the following year. As one of those rare pianists who can run the gamut from the most gracious, witty charm to orchestral sonorities, particularly in the left-hand writing at which Mozart became so daring even before this, Leonskaja puts these works at the deep centre of the series.

Leonskaja always treads the tightrope between prettiness and excessive emphases

For me, the real surprise was the quirkiness of K533 in F major, palpable late Mozartian complexity of light and shade, and if its three successors are simpler, our pianist makes sure they effortlessly shine. Perfection? For me, it's a yes. Can we have the Haydn and even the Beethoven sonatas complete from Leonskaja in good time, please?

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

An interview with Elisabeth Leonskaja

This cycle is a big undertaking. Why did you want to do it now?
It is a big undertaking, but everything is a challenge. In order to get something good, whether it's *The Well-Tempered Clavier* or the Beethoven Sonatas, you have a question of being challenged. Nothing is easy! I have never recorded the cycle before, though this is the third time that I tried. The first time was many years ago and I was not good; it was too much. I think experience is really everything; and I have probably learned something during all these years.

Was it important to you to present these sonatas in chronological order?
I think this is a more honest way of presenting it; otherwise I would be saying 'this sonata is more important, or this one should go first'. Why? I don't think people need it. It's like with books. If you open a book of poetry, you can choose which you'd like to read. It's not necessary, but they are presented from beginning to the end. And this is so easy with CDs – you push the button and you have it. To choose is very easy.

Is there a sonata in the set you are particularly fond of?
I think of the sonatas in terms of periods. I feel Mozart was probably most creative in the Mannheim and Munich Sonatas. There was something different about him there. His D major Sonata, K284 – with its last movement of 12 variations – is quite a long one, but it's different. It's not like the Vienna sonatas, it has the *Andante alla Polonaise*, followed by the finale with those variations. So it's very unusual. I love this sonata.

Orchestral

ORCHESTRAL CHOICE

An eclectic playlist from Ensemble K

Simone Menezes's gifted group glows from start to finish, says ***Julian Haylock***

Metanoia

JS Bach: Solo Violin Partita No. 1 – Sarabande; **Borodin:** Polovtsian Dances; **Pärt:** In spe; **Puccini:** Messa di Gloria – excerpts*; **Villa-Lobos:** Bachianas brasileiras No. 4
Manon Galy (violin); *Ensemble Sequenza 9.3; Ensemble K/ Simone Menezes
Accentus ACC 30567
51:39 mins

Simone Menezes has elected to re-record Borodin's *Polovtsian Dances* just a year after her debut album *Accents* (reviewed April 2021), and the results are even more beguiling. She takes more time over the magical opening (Russian pedal-pointing at its most skin-rippling), allowing her gifted group of players more room to shape Borodin's indelible melodic/harmonic inspiration, while the recording sets the ensemble within a radiantly glowing acoustic.

Violinist Manon Galy, a prize winner at last year's International Heifetz Competition, plays the Sarabande from JS Bach's B minor Partita. Her liquid-phrased micro-sensitivity creates a perfect curtain-raiser to the heartfelt Preludio to Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras* No. 4, played here with the kind of unbridled, white-hot intensity normally reserved for such epic all-string classics as Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*. Arvo Pärt's *In spe* (2010), a hypnotic work for winds and strings, appears to float on air in this performance.

> The Villa-Lobos is played with unbridled, white-hot intensity

Unexpectedly, the programme opens with Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* – or at least the Kyrie and four sections from the Gloria. In this early work, there's less *La bohème*-style melodic/harmonic succulence and rather more Verdi, whose Requiem (then only six years old) is brought to mind in several places. Puccini's youthful inspiration sounds most effective here, elegantly sung and played with scaled-back forces, making you wish you could experience the entire work performed with such devoted intimacy.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Beguiling Borodin: Simone Menezes's take on the *Polovtsian Dances* is magical

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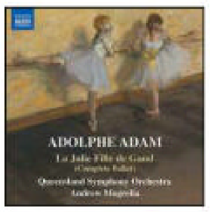
Adam

La jolie fille de Gand
Queensland Symphony Orchestra/ Andrew Mogrelia
Naxos 8.574342-43 (reissue: rec. 1996)
133:24 mins (2 discs)



Adolphe Adam (1803-56) is celebrated as the composer of the first full-length ballet score capable of standing on its own two feet – though a concert performance of *Giselle*'s Act II conducted by Vladimir Jurowski didn't rivet attention throughout. Neither *Giselle* nor the more lamentably-plotted ballet that followed it a year later, *La jolie fille de Gand*, comes within a million miles of the later masterpieces by Delibes and Tchaikovsky, or the delight we know as *La fille mal gardée* (ostensibly contemporary with Adam, but actually a pot-pourri ballet put together by John Lanchbery).

The best that can be said of this rarity is that it's *dansante* (danceable), and elegant in support of the drama's mime elements, such as they are (a silly Ghent girl with a talent for dance dreams of a glittering life with a Marquis, seems to be whisked off by him to Venice but wakes up to find it was only an ultimately bad dream).

Adam writes well for woodwind – the oboe carries what pathos there is, and pastoral/intimate moods are prettily evoked. The flamboyant music for the flashy aristocrats is good, too, though there's no evocation of place (I don't know what you'd expect of Ghent, but Venice might have had a pre-Offenbach bit of watery magic about it).

The rather thankless job of conducting the lot was well taken by Andrew Mogrelia back in 1996 (this recording first appeared on the Marco Polo label in 2001), and the Queensland Symphony Orchestra acquits itself with due aplomb. So, if you really feel you need to get a recording of this ballet, this is as good as it gets. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Bruckner

Symphony in D minor, 'Die Nullte'
Bruckner Orchester Linz/ Markus Poschner
Capriccio C 8082 43:49 mins

There's no avoiding the name of this symphony, and however vigorously you show it's a misnomer, you still have to explain how it came to have this unique title, as Paul Hawkshaw does in his indignant notes. Actually Bruckner himself is to blame, thanks to one of his ill-advised attempts at order. It should be Symphony No. 2, but since that is

already claimed it will go on being called 'The Noughth'. It was written after the Second Symphony, and is in no way immature, though it is no masterpiece.

What is fascinating is that in most respects it has the structure of a characteristic work, though the material Bruckner works with here is not on the level of his mature works. The most striking difference is that it has no really slow movement: the second movement is an *Andante*, a charming, even whimsical piece, played here by the Bruckner Orchester Linz with great charm. The work begins with a typical tramping rhythm, and there are already characteristic passages and gestures of the kind that we expect in the later works. But the material Bruckner is working with is not on their level, and his ways of working with it are primitive.

The most immediately identifiable movement is the third, a *Scherzo* with a slower central section. This is vintage. The last movement is the most problematic, as is often the case with Bruckner. Fortunately this performance is impeccable, in the safe hands of Markus Poschner, and I look forward to the continuation of the series. *Michael Tanner*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Bruckner • Wagner

Bruckner: Symphonies Nos 1 (1891 version) & 5; **Wagner:** Tristan Prelude & Liebestod
Leipzig Gewandhausorchester/ Andris Nelsons
DG 486 2083 145:13 mins (2 discs)

This double-disc release is the fourth in the cycle of Bruckner symphonies, together with Wagner preludes and extracts, recorded live by the Gewandhausorchester under Andris Nelsons. The finely arched opening phrases of the *Tristan* Prelude bode well, even if certain salient details in the *Liebestod* tend to get swallowed in the resonant acoustic of the Gewandhaus.

Unfortunately, Nelsons has opted for Bruckner's late revision of his First Symphony, in which the bold originalities of the original are recurrently alloyed by fussy alterations, and the headlong dash of the finale – a unique instance in Bruckner's output – is wrecked by constant tempo-changes.

Once he had completed his Fifth Symphony, on the other hand, Bruckner never seems to have felt the need to tinker with it, and it stands as one of his most uncompromising structures in its block-like contrasts and silences – requiring a special sense of the underlying relation between different tempos if movements are to be held together. Alas, it is evident from the opening pages of the Fifth, in which Nelsons starts slowly, takes the chorale slightly impatiently and then rushes the ensuing *allegro*, that he lacks this long-term co-ordinating sense. Later, at moments when brass or strings are going full volume, it is unclear whether the obscuring of inner detail is due to the recording or less than careful balancing of textures. With an orchestra of this stature, there are fine passages, of course. But this cannot be recommended as an essential release for Brucknerians. *Bayan Northcott*

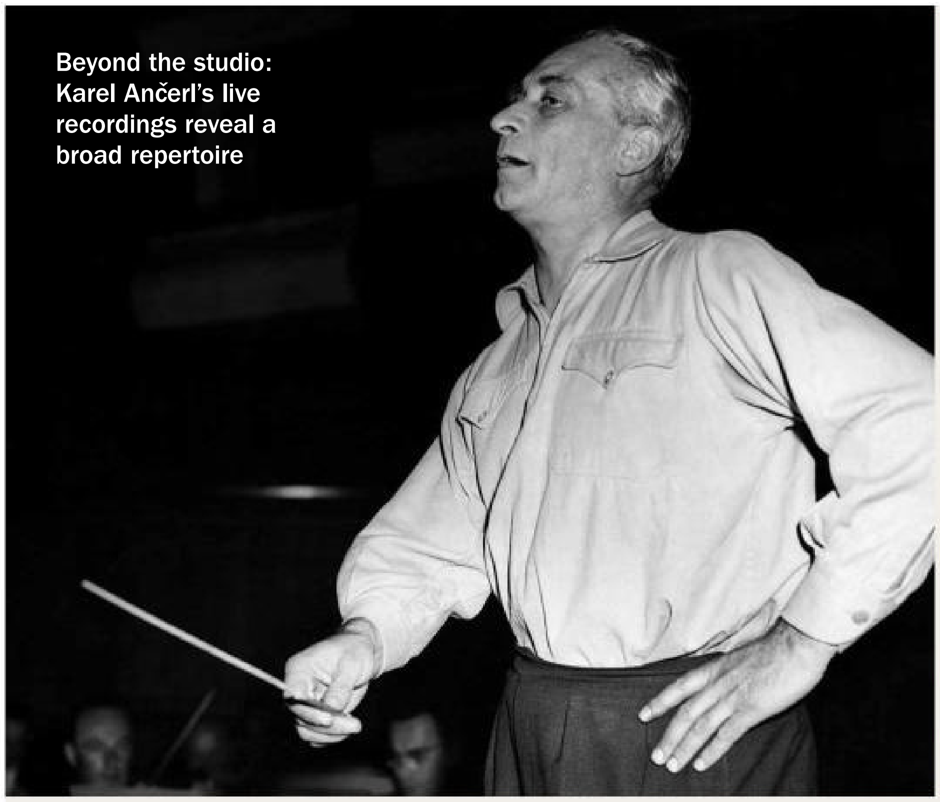
PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Korngold

Incidental Music: Much Ado About Nothing; Der Vampir
Holst-Sinfonietta Chorus; Holst-Sinfonietta/Klaus Simon
Naxos 8.573355 64:36 mins

Erich Wolfgang Korngold's Suite from *Much Ado About Nothing* has long been one of his most popular pieces, but it is rare to hear more of the music that he composed for the Shakespeare play, first heard in a production at Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna, in 1920. It turns out that there are a couple of other gems that aren't often heard, making this recording definitely a treat for the curious among Korngold fans.

Der Vampir is a rarer-still proposition, but to call this version 'complete' is sadly a bit misleading, because large chunks of the music are lost, or (possibly, one hopes) await rediscovery. The original drama has nothing whatever to do with *Dracula*. By Hans Müller – later the librettist for Korngold's opera *Das Wunder der Heliane* – it is about creativity, jealousy and greed. The music is interesting, works well in this 'melodrama' format and brings Korngold closer to the edgy



Beyond the studio: Karel Ančerl's live recordings reveal a broad repertoire

GETTY

From the archives

Andrew McGregor finds some surprising repertoire 'fills' in a new set of live recordings by Karel Ančerl

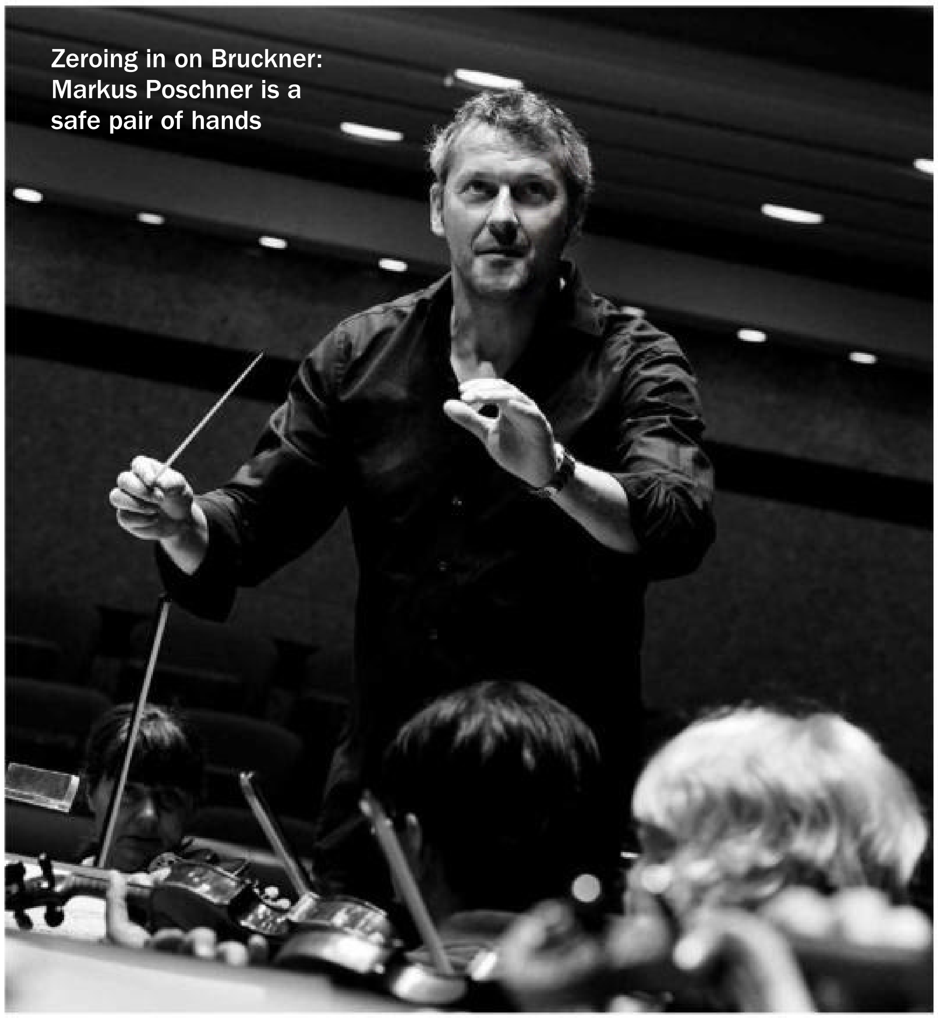
Collectors of Karel Ančerl and Czech Philharmonic recordings who thought they'd peaked with Supraphon's *Ančerl Gold Edition* are going to have to recalibrate. From the archives of Czech Radio comes ***Karel Ančerl Live Recordings*** (*Supraphon SU 4308-2; 15 CDs*), mostly unreleased concert broadcasts from 1949-68, adding significantly to Ančerl's discography with the orchestra. So why begin the set with one of the few things that doesn't: Smetana's *Má vlast*? Because it's a splendid document of Ančerl's 1968 appearance at the Prague Spring Festival, and Josef Suk's *Ripening* from that same Prague Spring is a major plus, both in decent stereo.

Almost all else is mono, and I'm going to pass over some of the standard fare – Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Strauss – because of the Czech repertoire that follows: Dvořák's Seventh and Eighth Symphonies in gripping performances and slightly gritty sound, and his *Biblical Songs* with imposing bass Ladislav Mráz; then Suk's tragic 'Asrael' Symphony in 1967, a special work for Ančerl, and a puzzling gap in his studio discography – at last we have it with the Czech Phil. The recordings of 20th-century Czechs fill major gaps: Josef Foerster's 'Easter Eve' Symphony No. 4, the only time Ančerl conducted it, celebrating the composer's centenary in 1959. Ančerl was an evangelist for Vítězslav Novák, whose 'Autumn' Symphony – this is the only available recording – is a post-Mahlerian soundscape with chorus. Ančerl gave early performances of two neo-classical symphonies by fellow-student Iša Krejčí – also the only recordings. Miloslav Kabeláč was a close friend and contemporary of Ančerl, who championed him worldwide and premiered his Fifth Symphony – a dark canvas where Suk meets Shostakovich.

And who has heard Ančerl's Debussy and Ravel (an excellent *Rapsodie espagnole*), or his Elgar and Vaughan Williams? Your appreciation of this great conductor will be the better for it.

BBC RADIO 3 90 – 93FM

Andrew McGregor is the presenter of Radio 3's *Record Review*, broadcast each Saturday morning from 9am until 11.45am


Zeroing in on Bruckner: Markus Poschner is a safe pair of hands

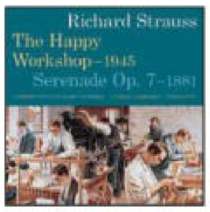
soundworld of Kurt Weill than we normally think of him.

While the recording is a must-have for Korngold collectors, there are a few problems. First, *Der Vampir* is text-heavy compared to the limited quantity of music: while Ekkehard Abele's narration is delivered with plenty of character, no text or translation is printed, so you'll need good German to enjoy the full impact. Next, although Hans Jörg Mammel's voice is appealing and the Holst Sinfonietta's playing enthusiastic and committed, the performance frays around the edges here and there. *Jessica Duchen*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

R Strauss

Sonatina No. 2, *The Happy Workshop*; Serenade, Op. 7
Carnegie Mellon Wind Ensemble/ George Vosburgh
Reference FR-745 50:33 mins



You may well ask what German composer could be happy in his artistic workshop as the Second World War drew to a close. Yet Richard Strauss had a remarkable ability to root himself in the German culture he felt those 'barbarians' the Nazis had done their best to destroy. In paying homage to Mozart's wind serenades, the *Gran Partita* especially, he pleased himself and left behind a number of what have been called 'Indian summer' scores which keep on the blithe side of life.

The Second Sonatina has its dark side, intimated in the first movement and at its most uneasily chromatic in the introduction to the finale. But otherwise it's the most delicious homage possible to the 18th century filtered through very personal sensibilities. Its high style and lacy demands are not, perhaps, ideal for young musicians like the ones from Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University who've just recorded the work under veteran conductor George Vosburgh. To be honest, I've heard so much better from youthful European ensembles. I wouldn't mind the fluffs and rough edges, but the spirit of song that has to permeate the work, and keep the long stretches of the outer movements afloat, seems wholly absent; there's no vocal phrasing here. Dynamics are mostly middle-range until we get to the very end. The finale actually works better as amiable drift than punchy reiteration, and the mellifluousness of the early Serenade is pleasant enough. Good sound captures the lower colours well. But this disc isn't competitive in the commercial recording market. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★
RECORDING ★★★★

REINHARD WINKLER

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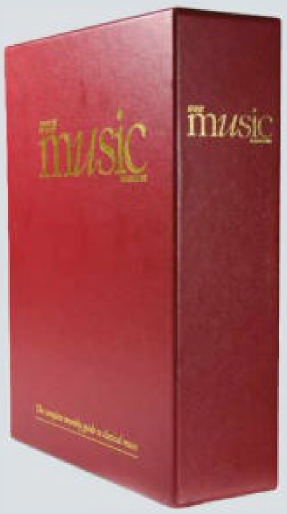

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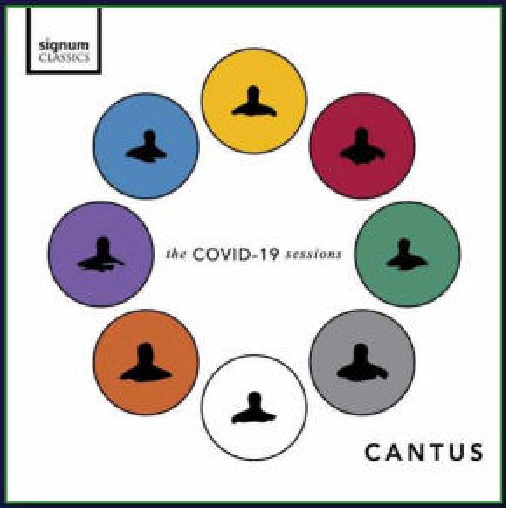

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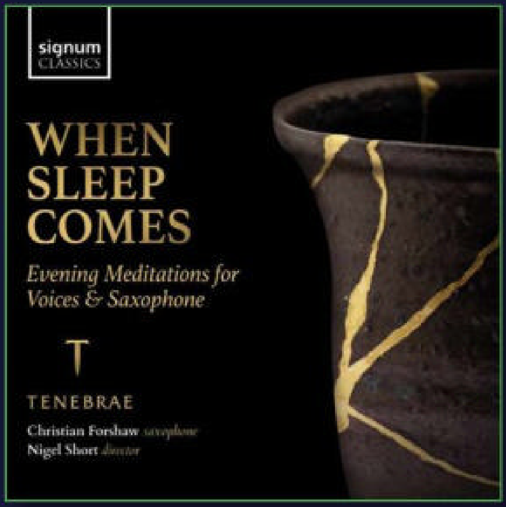

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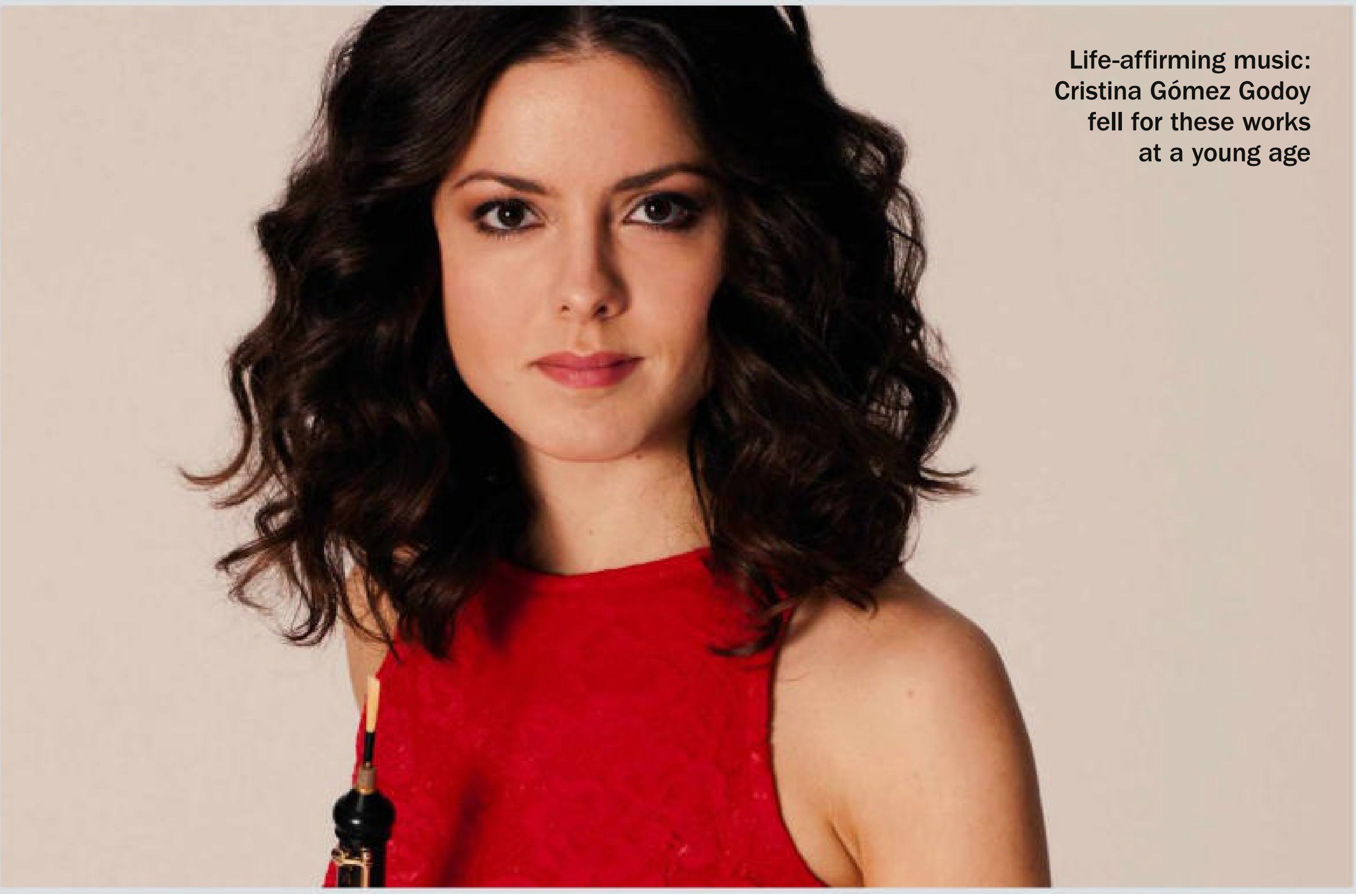
CONCERTO CHOICE

Mozart and Strauss works that mesmerise the ears

Malcolm Hayes enjoys the exceptional beauty of this pair of oboe concertos from Cristina Gómez Godoy



Life-affirming music: Cristina Gómez Godoy fell for these works at a young age

Mozart • R Strauss

Mozart: Oboe Concerto; **R Strauss:** Oboe Concerto
Cristina Gómez Godoy (oboe); West-Eastern Divan Orchestra/Daniel Barenboim
Warner Classics 9029507760 46:53 mins

Cristina Gómez Godoy joined Daniel Barenboim's Staatskapelle Berlin as principal cor anglais ten years ago, aged 21, and two years later became the orchestra's principal oboist. In the booklet note she writes that she wanted to record these two concertos 'because they are the reason I completely fell in love with the oboe and with music... If I could simply create in other people's lives this feeling of happiness that I had back then, my wish would be fulfilled!' She does that and more.

Godoy's tone has an exceptional purity and beauty, without a trace of narcissism, and her musicianship is as gifted as it gets. The oboe is a relatively restricted instrument in pitch-range and options of articulation and volume, but any such feeling of limitation is bypassed here by Godoy's ability to shape phrase after phrase in a way that mesmerises the ear, yet never sounds exaggerated or affected.

The Rondo finale of Mozart's concerto can sometimes come across as lightweight, even trite compared to its two gorgeous predecessors, but Godoy's artistry has it sounding in the same league. And her command of the long melodic spans so characteristic of Strauss's late jewel of a concerto is total, engaging happily with the music's winsome Mozartian connection.

> The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra's contribution is state-of-the-art

In the Strauss at the start of the first movement's central development section, the orchestral horns slightly smudge a couple of tricky unison phrases; everywhere else in both works the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra's contribution is state-of-the-art, responding to Barenboim's direction with a special class of supportive alertness, with the interplay between the woodwind pairs and solo oboe immaculately balanced.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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Eleanor Alberga

Violin Concerto No. 1; Violin Concerto No. 2, *Narcissus*; The Soul's Expression*
Thomas Bowes (violin), *Morgan Pearse (baritone); BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Joseph Swensen
Lyrita SRCD405 74:38 mins

Eleanor Alberga's first notated composition was a portrait of her pet dog, a golden retriever. She was ten years old, and the Jamaican-born composer's urge towards music that paints pictures and tells stories still persists now that she's in her early seventies.

The latest and most beguiling work, from 2020, is the violin concerto (No. 2) inspired by the Greek myth of Narcissus, featuring a self-regarding soloist who may begin soaring prettily but reaches a bad end plummeting toward silence in disordered, 'scordatura' tuning. It's the album's most striking example of Alberga's delight in dramatic effects. Along the way, the concerto's orchestral textures, aerated with prominent spots for piano, harp and vibraphone, compellingly demonstrate her ear for instrumental colour.

The gifted violinist, Thomas Bowes (also Alberga's husband), weaves his way through its moods with tenacity and aplomb. He works equally hard in the awkwardly ambitious First Concerto (2001), though it's hard for any soloist to shine very bright when the musical language is largely unfriendly, and the orchestra's principal moods are noisy rumpus and aggressive attack. The central slow movement, a possible homage to the spectral night moods of Bartók, one of Alberga's continuing influences, offers some relief, as does the performers' commitment.

The later song cycle *The Soul's Expression*, heard in its version for baritone and strings, proves another mixed bag: gripping in the abstract orchestral interludes; tortuous and barren in the songs themselves, all settings of 19th-century women writers. Maybe Alberga needs to reconnect with simpler things, like another golden retriever.
Geoff Brown

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Arnold • Gipps • Schönberger

Malcolm Arnold: Horn Concerto No. 2; **Ruth Gipps:** Horn Concerto; **Christoph Schönberger:** Horn Concerto

Ben Goldscheider (horn); Philharmonia Orchestra/ Lee Reynolds

Willowhayne WHR068 62:18 mins

As an 18-year-old, Ben Goldscheider displayed considerable stamina when he reached the finals of the 2016 BBC Young Musician of the Year competition while in the midst of revising for his exams. It was good training for the career of a horn player, daily faced with an instrument that without skill and determination can easily prove treacherous. You know you're in safe hands from Goldscheider's assertive first notes in Malcolm Arnold's Concerto No. 2, and his richly varied tones, from mellifluous to the almost rude, prove a joy on this well-recorded album.

Some of the music is a joy, too, with Arnold's compact creation from 1956 – by turns thrusting, singing and mysteriously eerie – only dropping in quality in the slightly rudimentary finale. Though equally mercurial, Ruth Gipps's concerto (1968) is also well-knitted. Blessed with inventive orchestral textures, it allows the Philharmonia and conductor Lee Reynolds plenty of chances to strut their stuff, though the recording balance sensibly places the soloist, often burbling away like a coffee percolator, always an inch ahead.

Both works prove excellent examples of post-war composers in Britain who, in Goldscheider's words, worked 'against the grain of musical fashion' and refused to kiss tonality goodbye. Alas, the tonal concerto written for Goldscheider by the German-born and UK-based Christoph Schönberger isn't in the same class. Almost as long as the other pieces combined, it limps along through decorative treatments of feeble material, often awkwardly stitched together. This is an extra reason for listeners to be grateful for Goldscheider's golden horn. *Geoff Brown*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Caplet • Dvořák

Caplet: Epiphanie (d'après une légende éthiopienne); **Dvořák:** Cello Concerto

Nadège Rochat (cello); Royal Scottish National Orchestra/Benjamin Levy

Ars Produktion ARS38301 60:22 mins

Dvořák's Cello Concerto is one of his most carefully considered works, yet he threw himself into this masterpiece with a will. A profoundly personal dimension is his introduction of a favourite song commemorating his ailing sister-in-law into the slow movement, and its return in the dreamlike rhapsody which ends the finale.

Interpretations of the Concerto abound and if this version does not approach Weilerstein and Bělohlávek's on Decca it has much to offer. Benjamin Levy's approach is unsentimentally business-like and at times verges on the perfunctory, notably at the start of the *Adagio*, but the orchestral playing is always graceful. The glory of this issue, however, is cellist Nadège Rochat's performance. She captures the improvisatory character of her first entry superbly and her memorably sweet tone is ideally suited to Dvořák's near-vocal lyricism.

Described as a 'Fresco based after an Ethiopian Legend', Caplet's *Épiphanie* of 1923, while undoubtedly influenced by his friend Debussy, is full of ear-catching individuality excellently captured in this committed reading. Overall, these well-recorded performances are well worth investigating for Rochat's playing. *Jan Smaczny*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Golden performer: Ben Goldscheider impresses in Arnold and Gipps concertos

Dohnányi

Harp Concertino; Konzertstück; Variatons on a Nursery Theme

Silke Aichhorn (harp), Andrei Ioniţă (cello), Sofja Gülbadamova (piano); Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz/Modestas Pitrėnas

Capriccio C5463 68:14 mins

Heir to the cultural riches of late-19th-century Europe, Dohnányi, born in Bratislava in 1877, studied in Budapest and by his twenties had acquired the reputation as one of Hungary's greatest pianists. The Konzertstück for Cello and Orchestra, completed in 1904, is a substantial concerto in three connected movements. Andrei Ioniţă is a passionately committed soloist who gets to the elusive soul of the first movement and goes on to revel in the captivating lyricism of the finale. While late Romantic influences come and go, this is a work of genuine originality which well deserves more frequent outings.

The *Variations on a Nursery Theme*, composed ten years later, is rich in humour and ingenuity, and remains Dohnányi's best-known work. An absurdly portentous introduction is completely subverted by the 'nursery theme' itself, a universal favourite of children best known to us as 'Twinkle, twinkle little star'. Exquisite orchestration abounds alongside some delicious harmonic writing, notably in the waltz Variation (No. 7), and Dohnányi plumbs unexpected depths in Variations 10 (Passacaglia) and 11 (Choral). The dazzlingly virtuoso solo part is superbly delivered by Sofja Gülbadamova.

Written in 1952, toward the end of an often painful life, the colourful and captivating Harp Concertino has a nostalgia occasionally evocative of late Strauss. In all three concertos the solo playing is magnificent. Modestas Pitrėnas and the orchestra accompany with enthusiasm, but ensemble is sometimes uncertain and the sound in some louder tuttis is a touch brash. *Jan Smaczny*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Enescu

Violin Concerto; Phantasy for Piano and Orchestra

Carolin Widmann (violin), Luiza Borac (piano); NDR Radiophilharmonie/Peter Ruzicka

CPO 555 487-2 53:33 mins

For the cellist Pablo Casals, George Enescu (1881-1955) was 'the greatest musical phenomenon since Mozart'. His equal genius as a violinist, pianist, conductor and composer has often been remarked upon, but when it came to his own music, Enescu's original voice did not fully establish itself until about 1900 or 1901, with such masterpieces as the Octet and two *Romanian Rhapsodies*. The two previously unrecorded works here are teenage efforts, both unpublished, and the realisation of their dispersed materials is the result of a labour of love by the Romanian composer-musicologists Pascal Bentoiu (who died six years ago) and Cornel Ţăranu, and the conductor Peter Ruzicka, no stranger to the rarer corners of Enescu's output.

The first movement of the incomplete Violin Concerto seems

FELIX BROEDE, KAUPO KIKKAS

to have been performed only once, in Paris in 1896 with Enescu as soloist. Heard with modern ears, it sounds like an uncanny cloning of Beethoven, Bruch and Brahms – disconcerting, but wonderfully played by Carolin Widmann. The Phantasy for Piano and Orchestra (1898) is a little more distinctive, if still somewhat Brahmsian, and Luiza Borac gives an arresting performance with the NDR Radiophilharmonie and Ruzicka. An interesting disc, but probably one for Enescu completists only. *John Allison*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Telemann

Viola Concerto, TWV 51:G9; Double Viola Concerto, TWV 52:G3*; Overture Suites, TWV 55:B8 & 55:g2; Fantasias for Solo Violin Nos 1 & 2 (arr. viola); Sonata en Canon in D minor, TWV 40:121*

Antoine Tamestit (viola), *Sabine Fehlandt (violin); Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin/Bernhard Forck

Harmonia Mundi HMM 902342 61:30 mins

Telemann's Viola Concerto is one of his best-loved compositions. There were few such works in the 18th century featuring the viola as a solo instrument and Telemann's may have been the first. The other concerto on the disc is for two solo stringed instruments of a similar pitch to the viola, but described as violettes. The rest of the programme features two of the composer's 12 Fantasias for solo violin, transposed to suit the viola, one of several canonic sonatas or *Canons mélodieux* and two *ouverture-suites* for strings. The *Ouverture burlesque*, TWV 55:B8, illustrates figures from the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, while the title of the other, *La Changeante*, TWV 55:g2, is more obscure, but may be indicative of a different key for each of its movements.

Antoine Tamestit's celebration of Telemann's viola writing, and the characterful vignettes which provide indelible colour to his orchestral suites, is an evenly sustained delight. The four movements of the Viola Concerto reveal the instrument in a true solo role, sometimes without string support, at others providing unison contrast.

Telemann celebration: Antoine Tamestit's set of viola concertos are a delight

PHILIPPE MATSAS

An enharmonic change at the conclusion of the third movement is, perhaps, especially arresting in this largely Italianate piece.

While Telemann's self-confessed diffidence in writing concertos ill reflects his ability to produce many wonderful examples, no such paradox exists where his orchestral suites are concerned. He loved the form and continued to add to his vast storehouse of them almost to the end of his life. Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, under its leader Bernhard Forck, does them full justice. *Nicholas Anderson*

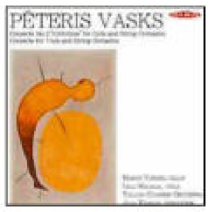
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Pēteris Vasks

Cello Concerto No. 2, *Presence*; Viola Concerto

Lilli Maijala (viola), Marko Ylönen (cello); Tallinn Chamber Orchestra/ Juha Kangas

Alba ABCD463 75:33 mins



Vasks's string writing goes to the heart of his purpose as a composer – and the concertos on this enterprising recording from conductor Juha Kangas and the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra are rapidly becoming classics. Both are intense outpourings fuelled by the shared anguish and beauty of the composer's beloved Latvia; freed in 1991 from Soviet rule yet, he fears, still at risk from dangers political, environmental and spiritual.

The Cello Concerto No. 2 (2011-12) is subtitled 'Klātbūtne' (Presence). Vasks has explained this means, 'With every breath I am here in this world with all my ideals and dreams of a better world.' Soloist Marko Ylönen brings a savage intensity to the work's emotional arc from birth, via death and cosmic release, to rebirth signalled by a lullaby (soulfully sung by orchestra violinist Eva-Maria Sumera). Cast in three movements, slow-fast-slow, the off-kilter Baltic rhythms of the second, *Allegro moderato*, have a rawness that reaches apotheosis in a brittle yet passionate cadenza.

The Viola Concerto (2013-14) is equally fierce in the capable hands of soloist Lilli Maijala, who infuses its urgency with a dark tenderness. Vasks describes the viola as 'the most melancholy instrument' and Maijala wrings pathos from each of the four movements; three of which are slow, but with constantly changing metres and tempos as the viola struggles to find light in darkness.

Throughout, the orchestra plays with verve, so it's a pity that the soloists are placed so considerably to the fore in the mix. *Steph Power*

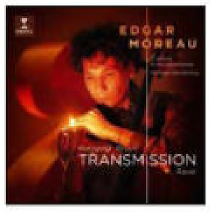
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Transmission

Bloch: From Jewish Life; Schelomo; **Bruch:** Kol Nidrei; **Korngold:** Cello Concerto; **Ravel:** Deux mélodies hébraïques

Edgar Moreau (cello); Lucerne Symphony Orchestra/ Michael Sanderling

Erato 9029510510 65:53 mins



French cellist Edgar Moreau explores his Jewish roots in a ravishing sequence by Jewish composers drawing on devotional traditions (Bloch), or not (Korngold), and by non-Jewish composers (Bruch, Ravel) for whom Hebraic music was a creative resource. I'll never forget my first encounter with Bloch's *From Jewish Life* as a child, performed by Raphael Wallfisch (whose Chandos recording I still treasure): the cello erupted out of bare, chiming piano chords like a searing flame. Since then they have become familiar, but they should always startle with their piercing directness. In the orchestral versions, that simplicity is harder to find. Surrounded by a cloud of harmony, Moreau performs them with great sensitivity, but misses their taut urgency. 'Supplication' is almost Romantic, and 'Jewish Song' mournful. By contrast, he captures well the fragile mystery in Ravel's haunting *Mélodies hébraïques*.

He delivers Bloch's epic *Schelomo* with magnificent command, tracing its ark from lamentation to shrill anger back to resignation. Michael Sanderling and the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra bring out the myriad colours in Bloch's evocation of Solomon (cello) and his people (orchestra). Beside Moreau's spacious reading, older recordings are notably more dynamic (Rostropovich, Piatigorsky), and Isserlis's narrative flair is hard to beat). But Moreau finds fluency and silken sophistication in Bruch's more distilled *Kol Nidrei*.

Korngold's rollicking Cello Concerto must be unique in having been created for a film about two warring musicians, Irving Rapper's *Deception* (1946). It's small but perfectly proportioned, a riot of orchestral colour, and a masterclass in eking music out of scraps from the cutting-room floor. *Helen Wallace*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

OPERA CHOICE

A tale of two halves in this collection of Handel arias

Emőke Baráth makes a star turn, but Jaroussky's conducting debut is a hit too, says ***Berta Joncus***

Energising singer: Emőke Baráth's Handel is truly a sonic feast

EDOUARD BRANE

Handel – *Dualità*

Arias from Arianna in Creta, Amadigi di Gaula, Partenope, Radamisto, Alcina, Faramondo etc
Emőke Baráth (soprano); Artaserse/Philippe Jaroussky
Erato 9029637062 72:21 mins

Soprano Emőke Baráth is the featured soloist of this album, but our attention is grabbed by the name of another singer, Philippe Jaroussky. This is the star countertenor's first commercial recording as a conductor. Jaroussky lets himself be led by Baráth, whose affective intensity and technical brilliance are most powerfully displayed in her extravagant additions.

Sticking to the score or not, she provides a sonic feast: rich bottom-register timbre, brilliant yet voluptuous top notes and a pure core that energises even her longest lines. Baráth says she selected arias that 'express the duality of the female soul', and she wanders most from Handel's music when passions collide. Through super-size leaps and dizzying upward spirals, she gets something new even out of Cleopatra's and Alcina's over-recorded arias. The band's input here is subtle, but crucial, as tense suspensions, pulsing meters and bubbly plucked-string realisations deepen each affect. Having sung often with Baráth, and very often with Ensemble Artaserse – which he co-founded in 2002 – Jaroussky knows he can trust his colleagues.

> Baráth gets something new even out of Cleopatra and Alcina's over-recorded arias

He also knows that climaxes sometimes need to be left alone. His gifts as a conductor stem from a virtuoso countertenor's instinctive understanding of which words to weight, how best to pace a vocal-obbligato dialogue and when silence, particularly important in Handel, should prevail.

Crossing to the podium is a rare move for a vocal virtuoso, and Jaroussky sets a high bar for his very full conducting and singing schedule this year.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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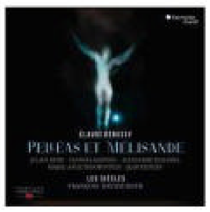
Debussy

Pelléas et Mélisande
Julien Behr, Vannina Santoni, Alexandre Duhamel, Marie-Ange Todorovitch, Jean Teitgen; Lille Opera Choir; Les Siècles/ François-Xavier Roth
Harmonia Mundi HMM905352.54
150:15 mins (3 discs)



Using early 20th-century wind instruments, and with gut strings for the string section, this *Pelléas* takes us closer than usual to how Debussy himself would have expected his opera to sound. It's like listening in black and white rather than colour. The music's generally soft-toned orchestral landscape is both vivid and beautifully shaded; and in the fiercer passages such as Golaud's brutalisation of Mélisande in Act IV, the strings deliver with a vehemence that might sound overdone on modern instruments, but doesn't here. The downside is François-Xavier Roth's insistence on minimal string vibrato, with almost none at all below mid-volume; the close-to-Baroque result doesn't convince. Meanwhile the excellent cast sings in a generalised modern style; and their voices are balanced just a notch too far forward.

Those reservations apart, in every other respect this is a remarkable *Pelléas* – sensitively played and paced under Roth's direction, and conveying like few other recordings the work's unique and poignant emotional charge. Among superb singing from all concerned, Alexandre Duhamel's Golaud comes across as an essentially decent man, driven to horrifying behaviour by a suspicious streak he can't control, then devastated with remorse. Vannina Santoni's appealing Mélisande is quite different from the minx-like portrayal that's over-fashionable today, so that Arkel's fondness for her feels real rather than deluded. Julien Behr's personable Pelléas convincingly avoids wet-fish syndrome; and boy treble Hadrien Joubert sings Yniold, whose solo scene with the offstage passing flock of sheep is exquisitely done. A full libretto and translations are included. *Malcolm Hayes*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

JS Mayr

Alfredo il Grande

Marie-Luise Dressen, Markus Schafer, Daniel Ochoa, Anna Feith, Sophia Körber, Philipp Polhardt; Simon Mayr Chorus; Members of the Bavarian State Opera Chorus; Concerto de Bassus/Franz Hauk

Naxos 8.660483-84 156:24 mins (2 discs)

A key event from the life of Alfred the Great – no, not the cakes! – is the subject of Johann Simon Mayr's late opera *Alfredo il Grande*. It's given its world-premiere recording here as part of Naxos's growing survey of the early 19th-century composer whose prolific output (some 70 operas) has sunk into obscurity, not least due to the ensuing operatic force that was Rossini, despite the interplay and influence between Mayr's work and the Italian's.

Playing out on the Somerset Levels, albeit with a slightly geographically-puzzling chorus of 'mountain dwellers', the plot sees future king Alfred the Great in heavy disguise, dodging war-mongering Danes en route to the throne, whilst rescuing true love Alsvita from the clutches of Danish leader, Gutrumo.

Dramatically Act II comes off better than Act I, although musically things are sometimes a little homogenous, if with sparks of determined originality, in Mayr's German/Italian marriage of classicism and lyricism. Elfrido's Act II aria, 'Ov'è la bella vergine', is one of the best known, with a chamber-like quality in the unusual combination of cello, violin, cor anglais, clarinet, horn and harp, sung tenderly by Marie-Luise Dressen. The harpsichord, too, is a sonic wildcard, an intermittent comedic device that also comes in for a battering as it mimics the sound of street fighting in Alinda's recitative 'Cresce il tumulto' (a likeable Anna Feith).

The young cohorts of the Simon Mayr Chorus (with members of the Bavarian State Opera) and the Concerto de Bassus do fine work with the monumental choruses under conductor Franz Hauk, who keeps things moving in this early melodrama. Of the likeable soloists, Markus Schafer's Gutrumo brings welcome dramatic colour and vitality. *Sarah Urwin Jones*

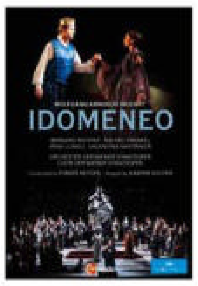
PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Mozart

Idomeneo (DVD)

Bernard Richter, Rachel Frenkel, Valentina Nafornița, Irina Lungu, Pavel Kolgatin; Vienna State Opera Chorus & Orchestra /Tomáš Netopil; dir. Kasper Holten (Vienna, 2019)

C Major DVD: 760208; Blu-ray: 760304 160 mins



Idomeneo is a puzzle. Mozart described it as a 'grosses oper', a grand opera that blended French and Italian traditions, and there are two distinct versions: the first commissioned for Munich in 1781, and a second for Vienna. Kasper Holten, who directed this production for the Vienna Staatsoper, suggests that it's an unfinished work that permits each generation to remake it. So, he moves the numbers that express Idamante's love for Ilia to the top making the opera less *Idomeneo, re di Creta* than Idamante, Prince of Crete.

It's a pedestrian production in search of a performance style, with the principals mostly 'semaphoring' their feelings rather than enacting them. They are as unmoving as the stylised chess pieces made in their likeness set out on the floor map of Crete. Fashionably penumbral lighting casts a gloom over the proceedings, played out around a large architectural rectangle that tilts and rises: a nudge in the direction of neo-classicism with costumes that pastiche late 18th-century dress.

Valentina Nafornita is a sweet-toned Ilia – at least by Act II – and her Idamante, Rachel Frenkel, is full of good vocal intentions. Bernard Richter is underpowered as Idomeneo. Best of all is Irina Lungu's Elettra who tears into her final aria 'D'Oreste, d'Aiace' as if there were no tomorrow, which of course there isn't for her! As you would expect, the chorus of the Staatsoper are magnificent and Tomáš Netopil coaxes elegant playing from the orchestra, notably the solo violin in Idamante's Act II *Rondo*. *Christopher Cook*

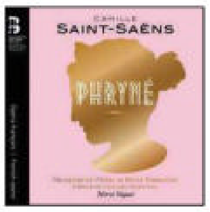
PERFORMANCE ★★★
PICTURE & SOUND ★★★

Saint-Saëns

Phryné

Florie Valiquette, Cyrille Dubois, Thomas Dolié, Anaïs Constans, François Rougier; Choeur du Concert Spirituel; Orchestre de l'Opéra de Rouen Normandie/Hervé Niquet

BruZane BZ1047 60:22 mins



Saint-Säens's posthumous reputation does him few favours and Palazzetto Bru Zane seems determined to rescue the composer's good musical name. *Phryné* is that organisation's sixth recording of his forgotten music.

This short *opéra-comique* from the 1890s takes its musical cue from Gérôme's celebrated salon painting, *Phryné devant l'aréopage* in which a young Athenian woman is disrobed before the city's judges to prove her beauty. With little chance of staging that, Saint-Säens opts for a story about young love – Phryné and Nicias – besting a hypocritical guardian-uncle, the magistrate Dicéphile.

In revisiting classical Greece, *Phryné* is probably rebuking a younger generation of French composers who were whoring after strange Nordic Gods East of the Rhine; but it's really Gallic delight in calling an old fool to heel with echoes of Molière and Offenbach.

Florie Valiquette is a winning Phryné, and Cyrille Dubois all that you could hope for in a French tenor as her beloved Nicias – their Act II duet deserves to be much better known. Yet it's Saint-Säens who is his own hero: the ensemble that ends Act I is masterly, and as ever a silky orchestrator works his magic – the prelude to Act II is spun gold in the hands of the admirable Hervé Niquet. *Christopher Cook*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Verdi

La forza del destino (DVD)

Saioa Hernández, Roberto Aronica, Amartuvshin Enkhbat, Annalisa Stroppa, Feruccio Furlanetto, Nicola Alaimo; Maggio Musicale Fiorentino Chorus & Orchestra/Zubin Mehta; dir. Carlus Padrissa (Florence, 2021)

Dynamic DVD: 37930; Blu-ray: 57930 190 mins

There are some excellent musical performances in this new production of *La forza del destino*, recorded last year at the Teatro del Maggio Musicale in Florence, not least from the house orchestra, on dazzling form under the baton of Zubin Mehta. Saioa Hernández gives a powerful, stately performance as Leonora; Amartuvshin Enkhbat – a voice to listen out for – is commanding as Don Carlo di Vargas. Though vocally a little uneven at the outset, Roberto Aronica settles into the role of Don Alvaro and exudes suitable heroism. If all the performances are dramatically rather static (bar that of Annalisa Stroppa, forced to twinkle as Preziosilla in a Halloween outfit and a costume with flaming breasts) it is hardly surprising, for this is a production that is, frankly, bonkers.

It always rings alarm bells when a director feels obliged to provide explanatory notes, as does Carlus Padrissa in the accompanying booklet, explaining that he has been inspired by the metaphysical theories of David Lewis, 'the Virgo research' and 'a large Michelson interferometer'. So we find

GETTY

BACKGROUND TO...
Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*

Debussy's single completed opera was a labour of love for the composer, who had longed to write something for the theatre – this work became the perfect vehicle to say something new. Based on Maeterlinck's 1892 symbolist play, it was largely complete by 1895, though wouldn't premiere until 1902 at the Paris Opéra-Comique. Nothing was straightforward, the composer having hastily to write orchestral interludes to cover noisy scene changes, and though it divided opinion, it is now considered a touchstone of 20th-century opera.

Role reversal: countertenor Théophile Alexandre steps into leading ladies' shoes

ourselves in a production that leaps forward act by act from a stylised 18th century, to the space age, to a post-apocalyptic 30th-century wasteland. Rather than being the precise, unifying ideological concept Padrissa says it is, this approach merely creates a sense of abstraction and alienation. With nothing to humanise the characters, or to ground the action in a recognisable setting, the bewildered viewer is likely to think, regrettably, 'why should I care?' *Alexandra Wilson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
PICTURE & SOUND ★★★★

Zandonai

Francesca da Rimini (DVD)

Sara Jakubiak, Jonathan Tetelman, Ivan Inverardi, Charles Workman; Deutsche Oper Berlin Chorus & Orchestra/Carlo Rizzi; dir. Christof Loy (Berlin, 2021)

Naxos DVD: 2.110711; Blu-ray: NBD0142V 140 mins

The most successful opera by Riccardo Zandonai (1883-1944) was premiered in Turin in 1914 – not the most auspicious year in which to launch an international success.

Nevertheless, with a libretto drawn by Zandonai's publisher Tito Ricordi from Gabriele D'Annunzio's play, *Francesca da Rimini* would go on to enjoy a limited yet continuing existence at the fringes of the repertoire. The piece can certainly boast a fascinating score that reveals the composer's extraordinary technical skills, with their combination of opulence and refined sensuality influenced by Debussy and Richard Strauss; here it finds an ideal interpreter in the shape of conductor Carlo Rizzi. In his visually striking modern-dress staging (2021) from the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Christof Loy's intellectual approach is searching but never overbearing.

Encouraged by her family to marry a Malatesta for political reasons, Sara Jakubiak's tirelessly lyrical Francesca is led to believe that her husband will be Chilean-American tenor Jonathan Tetelman's aptly comely Paolo (nicknamed 'il bello') – though this is a ruse to disguise the fact that she is instead wedding Ivan Inverardi's much older and less appealing Gianciotto. When the vile third Malatesta brother, Charles Workman's darkly powerful Malatestino, decides to make his own play for his sister-in-law, the scene is set for a family tragedy on a grand scale.

What may tell against the piece is that Zandonai's bejewelled setting occasionally disguises material that is less memorable on its own account; but this is undeniably a work well worth encountering and it could hardly be delivered more convincingly than it is here. *George Hall*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
PICTURE & SOUND ★★★★★

No(s) Dames – *A Genderless Tribute to Opera's Heroines*

Arias by Bellini, Bizet, Gluck, Grieg, Mozart, Offenbach, Verdi, Piazzólla, Tchaikovsky et al

Théophile Alexandre (countertenor); Quatuor Zaïde

NoMadMusic NMM095 76:41 mins

When did you last listen to a recording that credited the suppliers of gloves and corsets? But then when did you hear a countertenor embodying opera's tragic heroines? Théophile Alexandre is a gifted dancer and an admired singer and *No(s) Dames*, with its punning title, is clearly his project. As he declares in the sleeve notes 'In four centuries of masculine operas, heroines' fates have been as monstrous as their arias are sumptuous. So what if, for once, Drama didn't rhyme with Diva? What if we dared reversing the roles? What if we uncorseted gender stereotypes?'

Loosen your stays as in a sequence of 23 abbreviated episodes, we encounter Carmen, Barbarina, Alcina, Salomé, Manon, Violetta and Norma – and other 'wronged' women, who composers and their librettists have killed, abducted, abandoned or driven mad. The admirable Zaïde Quartet give them their music in arrangements by Eric Mouret, which range from a remarkable version of Offenbach's Barcarolle to a somewhat hobbled dance for Salomé. Some of the tracks end with abrupt cuts – but is that perhaps irony at work?

Naturally, Théophile Alexandre is centrestage finding voices for his chosen victims, 'covered' for Amina's 'Ah! non credea mirarti', creamily mezzo-ish for Carmen's Habanera and for Violetta a soprano at the end of her vocal tether in 'Addio del passato'. A delicious whiff of Gallic camp wafts across the whole recording with Alexandre a kind of night club torch singer, but it's a reminder that theatre has always allowed us to slip in and out of gender. *Christopher Cook*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Tormento d'amore

Arias by Caresana, Cavalli, Cesti, Sartorio, Stradella, Vinci et al

Ian Bostridge (tenor); Cappella Neapolitana/Antonio Florio

Warner Classics 9029503707 68:51 mins

Recently Ian Bostridge has produced recordings of Schubert, Respighi and songs by Noël Coward – all intelligent and notable productions but quite some way away from early operatic arias. His last foray into this area was the title role of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in 2005, and in some ways this disc may be considered a belated extension of that exploration. It sets out to demonstrate that the tenor voice had an important role on the early stage, and it also takes us on a journey from the beginnings of opera in Venice (Cavalli, Stradella, Cesti) to Naples (Caresana, Provenzale, Fago) and then back to Venice again (Vinci, Legrenzi and Vivaldi).

Bostridge is at his best in those pieces requiring technically adroit command and intelligent poise. He floats through the busy roulades signifying the turning wheel of Fortune in Caresana's 'Tien ferma Fortuna', and in Cesti's 'Berenice, ove sei?' he eases his voice perfectly into the complex harmonies. Sometimes he concentrates on the lyricism or pushy bravura required at the expense of more subtle characterisation using the voice. The bravura is excellent in Vinci's 'Se il mio paterno', but in his blood-curdling 'Gelido in ogni vena' we miss the dark, rasping savagery which can only be produced by surrendering a little of the impressive technique. The sunlight returns at the end when Bostridge serves up a wonderfully captivating performance of the traditional Neapolitan song, 'Lu cardillo' (made famous by, of all people, Joan Baez who in her version charmingly murders the Italian). *Anthony Pryer*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

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Choral & Song

CHORAL & SONG CHOICE

Holy Week music of haunting beauty

Kate Bolton-Porciatti **hears a compelling programme from The Gesualdo Six**

Tenebrae Responsories
– Feria Quinta

Judith Bingham: Watch with me; **Gesualdo:** Tenebrae Responsories for Maundy Thursday; **Tallis:** Lamentations of Jeremiah I & II; **Joanna Ward:** Christus factus est
The Gesualdo Six/Owain Park
Hyperion CDA68348 69:49 mins

The half-dozen male singers of Gesualdo Six, under the alert and sensitive direction of Owain Park, have already produced a quartet of first-rate recordings. This one, exploring the crepuscular soundworld of the Tenebrae services for Holy Week, is equally compelling.

> Owain Park's direction of the music is sensitive and alert

To highlight the ensemble's versatility, the programme juxtaposes English and Italian, Renaissance and works of our own time: Tallis's *Lamentations of Jeremiah* give way to Judith Bingham's *Watch with me*, whose text in turn pre-empts Gesualdo's *Tenebrae Responsories for Maundy Thursday*. Specially commissioned to end the programme is Joanna Ward's chilling *Christus factus est* (a gradual for Maundy Thursday) whose floating melodies fragment into eerie murmurings.

As one might expect, the musical canvas is predominantly dark hued – like a late Rembrandt – though lighter brushstrokes illuminate the shadows and the sound is infinitely variegated: sonorous, velvety, plangent, luminous. Words and polyphonic strands are lucid, and while The Gesualdo Six can build up intense and resonant climaxes, their voices are never forced.

Their practice of performing in a circular formation allows the singers to create the most intimate of 'sacred conversations': they declaim and whisper, exalt and despair – always in alert response to the words. In sum, these are accounts of haunting beauty – warmly recommended.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Sacred conversations: The Gesualdo Six create an intimate soundworld

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CPE Bach • JS Bach

JS Bach: Magnificat, BWV 243*; **CPE Bach:** Magnificat, Wq. 215
Miriam Feuersinger, *Anja Scherg (soprano), Marie Henriette Reinhold (alto), Patrick Grahl (tenor), Markus Eiche (bass); Gaechinger Cantorey/ Hans-Christoph Rademann
Accentus ACC30563 62:52 mins

Composed in 1723, Johann Sebastian Bach's Magnificat was his first major work as newly appointed Cantor of St Thomas, Leipzig. Twenty-seven years later, in an unsuccessful bid to succeed to the post, his second surviving son Carl Philipp Emanuel presented his own version. The two settings make for a fascinating comparison. Where JS opens with an ornate dance of stately jubilation, CPE dashes into action like the arrival of some Queen of Sheba. And while JS proceeds with a sequence of brief arias and choruses, CPE is less contrapuntal, more nervous and mannerist in style, with abrupt pauses or changes of dynamics, though culminating in an uncharacteristically sustained fugue as if in respectful tribute to his father.

Of these two performances by the Stuttgart-based Gaechinger Cantorey, the CPE Bach comes over more vividly, with sharply articulated detail under the energetic direction Hans-Christoph Rademann. Something of the contrapuntal intricacy, and the wonted brightness of the three trumpets, in the JS Bach is lost in the slightly recessed acoustic of the Forum am Schlosspark Ludwigsburg (not some Ludwig of Bavaria folly but a modern conference hall). Still, there is some fine work from the vocal and instrumental soloists. To compare JS Bach's soulful setting of 'Quia respexit', expressively delivered here by soprano Miriam Feuersinger to the excitable CPE Bach version with tenor Patrick Grahl is to hear just how music had moved on between father and son.
Bayan Northcott

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

JS Bach

St John Passion
Julia Doyle (soprano), Alexander Chance (countertenor), Nick Pritchard, Peter Davoren (tenor), Alex Ashworth (baritone), William Thomas (bass); Monteverdi Choir; English Baroque Soloists/ John Eliot Gardiner
DG 486 1822 115:61 mins (2 discs)

John Eliot Gardiner's 1986 studio recording of the *St John Passion* for DG Archiv set a new benchmark. Then came a live set enshrining a 2003 concert performance in Könnigslutter's Kaiserdom – a viscerally-charged

reading that arguably superseded its predecessor. Now comes a third: also live but given at Oxford's Sheldonian Theatre, socially-distanced, and without an audience. It was streamed on Good Friday last year and marks Gardiner's return to the DG fold. As the accompanying Blu-ray underlines, it's also a reminder of the tribulations faced by music-making under Covid; and of the transcendent, transformative power of music. It felt, says Gardiner, like emerging out of hibernation, and that might account for the (very) few insecurities. But the wonder is that in the circumstances the performance emerges so taut, dramatically focused, and exactingly crafted.

It's hardly a surprise though. The *Johannes-Passion* has long held a special place in Gardiner's heart; and, singing off-score, his choir doesn't so much relay the narrative as inhabit it. Virile yet supple, the singers are equally at home as a baying mob, avaricious soldiers or the vehicle through which Gardiner tellingly weighs every word in the commentating chorales. And once again he's struck gold in his Evangelist. In the English tradition of light, lyrical tenors, Nick Pritchard is consummately involved and involving – the perfect vocal foil to William Thomas's Christus, a bass with ringing, measured authority. Among the arias Julia Doyle's 'Ich folge dir gleichfalls' is a quicksilver delight. The 2003 recording on Gardiner's own label remains first choice; but, two decades on, his Bach has lost none of its bite. *Paul Riley*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Handel

Apollo e Dafne; Armida abbandonata

Kathryn Lewek (soprano), John Chest (baritone); Il Pomo d'Oro/ Francesco Corti

Pentatone PTC 5186 965 72:27 mins

Having led Handel's *Messiah*, *Orlando* and *Ariodante* onstage, soprano Kathryn Lewek here turns to Handel cantatas. Her selection is shrewd: *Armida abbandonata* and *Apollo e Dafne* both channel technical, affective and dramatic prima donna power. Lewek wields this power majestically.

Armida and Dafne are opposite characters. Abandoned by her lover, the sorceress Armida is bereft; dismissive of men, the nymph Dafne flees Apollo's advances and delights in her freedom. Handel fit his melodies to their very different dramas, giving Armida tearful laments and brooding arioso, while Dafne gets radiant simplicity and defiant sprightliness. Lewek builds on these distinctions in how she modulates her instrument and elaborates her melodies. Her Armida commands vocal muscle and jagged cadenzas, while her Dafne is all limpid purity sprinkled with *agréments*. The effect is spellbinding.

Il Pomo d'Oro do their own shape-shifting, in obbligato lines especially. Instrumental soloists sparkle in their exchanges with Lewek. The band often changes the mood, as when the entry of Apollo turns the day from sunny to menacing. The programme includes an instrumental 'suite' – in fact, dances pieced together – from Handel's first opera, *Almira* (1705). The players delightfully enrich its tunes, not least the sarabande that Handel later used in *Rinaldo* for 'Lascia ch'io pianga'.

Baritone John Chest is a bit miscast in this project. An opera star, he sings gorgeously but wants poetry. Director Francesco Corti's tempo is too fast for Apollo's chase of Daphne ('Mie piante correte'), denying this music the space its richness requires. Elsewhere in this recording, however, the artistry on display is stunning. *Berta Joncus*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Mompou

Mélodies et Chansons

Julia Sophie Wagner (soprano), Steffen Schleiermacher (piano)

MDG MDG6132219 52:45 mins

A master of self-effacing, yet curiously beguiling piano miniatures redolent of Satie in winsomely esoteric mood, Federico Mompou also wrote songs that generally are equally undemonstrative. This welcome new selection from soprano Julia Sophie Wagner and pianist Steffen Schleiermacher spans the composer's output, unusually presenting the songs' French versions. Opening with his final cycle, *Cinq mélodies* of 1973, it is apparent Mompou retained the same spirit as the *Quatre mélodies* of nearly 50 years earlier, essentially residing in the walled garden of Fauré's later years. Wagner floats ethereally in conveying the mesmerising sustained melancholy of 'Le vin perdu' from the later cycle or 'L'Incertitude' from the earlier one.

The cycle *Combat du rêve* is equally enrapturing while the children's counting rhymes of *Huit Comptines* have an artlessness that recalls Poulenc at his most innocently playful. The joyous *Chanson de la foire* and surprisingly belligerent Psalm and Ave Maria provide contrast. It is a pity that, despite Mompou carefully ensuring the texts are paramount, they can often only be discerned with the booklet to hand. Despite this, Wagner captures Mompou's musical spirit well and Schleiermacher's accompaniments, on a gorgeous 1901 Steinway, are finely judged throughout. *Christopher Dingle*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Shaking up Schubert: Benjamin Appl leads us on a fresh path in his *Winterreise*

Schubert

Winterreise

Benjamin Appl (baritone), James Baillieu (piano)

Alpha Classics ALPHA 854 69:19 mins

If the protagonist of Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* had somehow sidestepped his watery fate only to be rejected for a second time some ten years later, might *Winterreise* be the offspring? Both cycles deal with rejection but the latter more philosophically; and Benjamin Appl's traveller is perhaps resigned rather than bitter, less inclined to wallow, intent on understanding. And in the concluding 'Der Leiermann' – sung with artful simplicity and humanity – there's the sense of a turning point. As Appl has it in the liner notes: 'the prospect of community'.

Winterreise is an unending journey of discovery. Appl's mentor Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau recorded it nearly a dozen times, and some of his approach to lieder is apparent in Appl's probing of each word, each colour. Lacking, mercifully, is Fischer-Dieskau's later predisposition towards mannered, sometimes histrionic declamation. Indeed, Appl keeps his powder dry, carefully husbanding climaxes for when their impact is most potent. The tone is generally confiding, the voice raised only in moments of deepest anguish. Both 'Die Post' and 'Der greise Kopf' are object lessons in sophisticated nuance; 'Der Wegweiser' is exquisitely layered; and the veiled opening of 'Die Krähe' speaks to a profound ambiguity, as if Appl is frightened of scaring away his possibly menacing overhead companion. Insight for insight Appl is more than matched by his pianist James Baillieu, a storyteller to his staccato-cherishing fingertips. The recording keeps the piano very 'present' in the

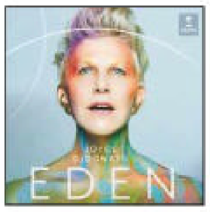
ASH MILLS, DAVID RUANO

partnership. But then partnership is the point. In their mutually enriching symbiosis Schubert's journey emerges thoughtful and newly-minted. *Paul Riley*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Eden

Songs, Lieder and Arias by Copland, Gluck, Handel, Ives, Mahler, Rachel Portman et al
Joyce DiDonato (soprano); Il Pomo d'Oro/Maxim Emelyanychev
Erato 9029646515 68:29 mins



Joyce DiDonato's formidable powers continue to extend far beyond the concert hall. A committed activist who has addressed everything from prison reform to the plight of refugees in her far-reaching projects, DiDonato here turns her attention to humanity's relationship with nature in an ambitious initiative entitled *Eden*. This four-year project combines a global recital tour with an interdisciplinary music-nature education and community programme, with this excellent recording as its calling card.

Programmed with depth and imagination, the album explores humankind's interaction with nature from a range of perspectives, deftly incorporating some four centuries of music. The selection opens with Ives's shimmering *The Unanswered Question*, the haunting trumpet line instead rendered by DiDonato herself with affecting clarity and poise. From here, we crisscross through the centuries. It is perhaps no surprise that the various 18th-century works included find DiDonato on especially thrilling form, from the gorgeous tumult she summons in 'Toglierò le sponde al mare' from Josef Mysliveček's *Adamo ed Eva* to the grace and beauty of Handel's 'As with Rosy steps the morn' from *Theodora*. Yet DiDonato shines, too, in the more contemporary works; she offers a heartfelt account of Rachel Portman's cinematic new commission, *The First Morning of the World*, and finds delicate pathos in 'Nature, the gentlest mother' from Copland's *Eight Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Also featuring the outstanding period ensemble Il Pomo d'Oro (who sound just as at home with Mahler as with Marini),

Russian treasures: Katharina Konradi performs a rich and varied programme

this is a highly commendable recording that commands serious attention for both its music and its message. *Kate Wakeling*

RECORDING ★★★★
PERFORMANCE ★★★★

Ombres – *Women Composers of La belle époque*

Songs by Bonis, Chaminade, Ferrari, Holmès, Viardot et al
Laetitia Grimaldi (soprano), Talia Erdal (cello), Ammiel Bushakevitz (piano)
BIS BIS-2546 (CD/SACD) 69:03 mins

This recital combines songs by increasingly familiar figures like Augusta Mary Anne Holmès, Mel Bonis, Cécile Chaminade and Pauline Viardot with more recent 'rediscoveries': Armande de Polignac, harpsichordist Juliette Folville, folklorist Marguerite Béclard d'Harcourt, pianist-poet Hélène-Frédérique de Faye-Jozin and opera composer Gabrielle Ferrari.

This fine duo has evidently done extensive research to assemble this innovative and attractive programme. Although each composer is unique, the recital is unified by the distinctive, otherworldly *belle-epoque* aesthetic.

Bonis's songs have gloriously sensual piano accompaniments and unexpected harmonies. The melody of 'Élève-toi mon âme' soars alongside the cello obbligato, beautifully played by Talia Erdal. Bushakevitz's fingers are fleet in the sparkling, rapid textures of Chaminade's 'Villanelle', while 'L'anneau d'argent' is performed with tenderness and dignity.

Polignac transforms the mood, recalling Reynaldo Hahn, but with a more exploratory voice. 'Jardin du roi' brings magical tranquillity. Slighter songs, like that by Folville and Ferrari, are still delivered sympathetically.

Viardot's mercurial cosmopolitanism is brilliantly showcased, with an enjoyable deep piano rumble in 'Les ombres de minuit' and a spacious, luminous rendition of 'Les deux roses'. The single song by Béclard d'Harcourt is impressive.

Holmès's songs are wonderfully operatic. The recitative-like 'C'est un oiseau' retains integrity of melody in this heartfelt performance. The deceptively simple 'Les lavandières' packs an expressive punch. 'À Trianon' makes a playful ending to this revelatory recital.

Grimaldi's sweet-toned voice is often hugely appealing, and she's excellently matched by Bushakevitz. Although I wanted more colouristic variety and expressive range, this delightful recital is a must for all French song-lovers. *Natasha Loges*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Russian Roots

Shostakovich: Piano Trio No. 1; Seven Romances on Poems by Alexander Blok; **Weinberg:** Jewish Songs; **plus songs by Auerbach, Beethoven, Gubaidulina, Rachmaninov and Stravinsky**
Katharina Konradi (soprano); Trio Gaspard
Chandos CHAN 20245 73:51 mins

There is perhaps still a tendency to typecast Russian song as essentially gloomy and soulful. This intriguing programme to an extent meets those expectations. At its heart there's Shostakovich's *Seven Romances on Poems by Alexander Blok*, and his close friend Weinberg's bitter-sweet *Jewish Songs*, Op. 13 (published and subsequently recorded on Melodiya under the title 'Children's Songs'). Rachmaninov also sits firmly in the 'soulful' camp with his *Vocalise* – beautifully performed here by Kyrgyz soprano Katharina Konradi, accompanied by the excellent Gaspard Trio (playing an arrangement by Roland Vieweg). Yet variety is provided with more playful and quirky works by Stravinsky, Gubaidulina and Lera Auerbach, and the album starts on a light note with four charming yet effective arrangements of Russian folksongs by Beethoven.

It's no surprise to read in Konradi's biography that she has had success as Sophie in Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*. Her youthful yet attractively rich-toned voice and beguiling musicianship, with an appropriate touch of skittishness at the start of the Weinberg set, works extremely well through most of these works. Only in Shostakovich's Blok settings does her imaginative grasp of the text she sings appear somewhat limited, most notably 'The Prophetic Bird Gamuyan', whose nightmarish imagery the cycle's original dedicatee Galina Vishnevskaya, unafraid of sometimes putting characterisation above beauty of sound, made a great deal more of. As a whole, though, this is a wonderfully varied programme, including – as complement to the Blok settings – Shostakovich's First Piano Trio, a lovelorn yet tongue-in-cheek work the Gaspards perform to perfection. *Daniel Jaffé*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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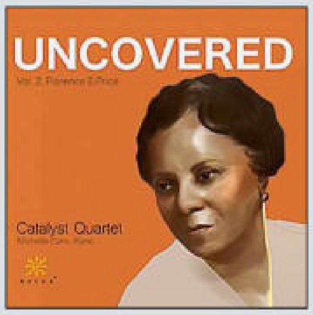
Chamber

CHAMBER CHOICE



The Price is right for these Catalyst Quartet premieres

This album of works by Florence Price offers further insights into her musical world, says ***Steph Power***

Revealing masterpieces: the Catalyst Quartet give richly expressive accounts

Price

Uncovered, Vol. 2: String Quartets – in G (unfinished); in A minor; Piano Quintets – in A minor; in E minor; Negro Folksongs in Counterpoint; Folksongs in Counterpoint
Michelle Cann (piano); Catalyst Quartet
Azica Records ACD-71346
113:05 mins (2 discs)

This second issue in Azica's 'Uncovered' series of Black chamber composers presents the known piano quintets and string quartets of Florence Price (1887-1953), spanning late 1920s to 1951. That four are world-premiere recordings signals the less comfortable 'uncovering' that, despite becoming the first Black woman to be performed by a major symphony orchestra (Chicago, 1933), Price was marginalised in her lifetime and neglected following her death.

Beautifully performed by the Catalyst Quartet, joined by pianist Michelle Cann for the Quintet in A minor (c. 1935) and possibly unfinished Quintet for Piano and Strings (date unknown), the works reveal Price's distinctive Romantic sensibility coming alive in chamber music richly expressive of Black folkloric musical traditions. The quartet *Negro Folksongs in Counterpoint* (c. 1947), together with the later *Five Folksongs in Counterpoint* (1951), teems with vivacious and often poignant contrapuntal invention reflecting Price's deep religious faith. A fascinating glimpse of an earlier possible stylistic road is afforded by the unfinished String Quartet in G major (poss. 1929) with its second-movement pizzicato swagger – while the E minor Quintet explores a chromaticism steeped in melodic agility.

The works reveal Florence Price's distinctive Romantic sensibility

The A minor Piano Quintet and String Quartet No. 2, both substantial works, show suppleness in formal and thematic thinking, with third movements based on the syncopated Juba Dance. The Quartet's lovely harmonic ambivalence make it a real revelation.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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Beethoven

Symphonies Nos 2 (arr. Ries) & 5 (arr. C Matthews)
Leonidas Kavakos (violin), Yo-Yo Ma (cello), Emanuel Ax (piano)
Sony Classical 19439940142 68:45 mins

This is the second recording from a superstar trio whose individual players have already notched up a fair few Beethoven discs. But here are pieces usually out of soloists' reach, performed in arrangments for piano trio.

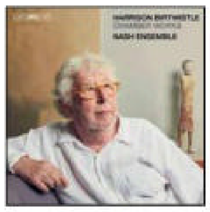
Symphony No. 2 is played in an arrangement by one of Beethoven's own pupils, Ferdinand Ries. If Liszt turned the piano into an orchestra with his arrangement of this piece, Ries opts for the opposite tack. His scaled-back symphony is pure chamber music, and the trio play it as such. The ensemble sounds as one: supple, elegant – and, dare I say it, ever so slightly bland.

For playing that honours Beethoven's radical quality, listen to this performance of Colin Matthews' fresh and unexpected arrangement of the Fifth. A gifted orchestrator, here Matthews performs the magic trick in reverse. His gift is that while he gets right into the voice of a composer, neither diminishing nor diluting it, his versions are yet somehow tinged with his own individual twist – you can hear it in the way he uses one of the instruments to double another, just for an instant, or how a melody seamlessly glides between violin and cello. This is a Beethoven Five to return to and savour. *Rebecca Franks*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Harrison Birtwistle

Duet for Eight Strings; Piano Trio; Oboe Quartet; Pulse Sampler
Nash Ensemble
BIS BIS-2561 (CD/SACD) 64:44 mins



Harrison Birtwistle's *Duet for Eight Strings* ends as it begins: gradually, its stilted phrases punctuated by silence. The one-movement work, commissioned by featured performers the Nash Ensemble, has been extended since its first performance in 2019 and now spans almost 20 minutes,

during which everything and nothing happens. The piece is brightly coloured, yet the shading feels subtle to the point of insignificance. Patchwork sections are neatly joined and despite the varied textures the stitches are invisible. The overall shape is fuzzy; there are moments of irritation rather than climax. The occasionally rasping timbre is contrasted by exhalations from both viola and cello – as well as viola player and cellist. The breathy expressions heard by Lawrence Power and Adrian Brendel do not distract in this premiere recording.

Birtwistle's recent works have tended to develop in stages. The Oboe Quartet evolved from a single piece into a four-movement work. Oboist Gareth Hulse impresses in this complex, fragmented soundworld that blends spiky outbursts and extended notes with a pared-back third movement. *Pulse Sampler* similarly grew from music originally composed in 1981, with a more varied percussion part added in 2018. The continuous oboe part and ever-changing pulse (set by percussionist Richard Benjafield) is perfectly managed by Melinda Maxwell.

The Trio is more of a 'Duo', as the violin and cello are treated almost as one instrument, in duet with the piano. There are moments when it seems as though the piano is playing an entirely different piece, only to be neatly reintegrated before this could be problematic. The balance is impeccable, as is the case throughout this collection. *Claire Jackson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Jenkins

Four-Part Consorts: Fantasies Nos 1-17; Pavans
Phantasm
Linn Records CKD677 76:15 mins

Phantasm's hat-trick of recordings exploring the complete viol consorts of John Jenkins reaches its conclusion here with the four-part works of the 1620s. The disc features 17 fantasies and two pavans – and if that sounds like too much of a good thing, rest assured that Jenkins fills these bonbons with sufficient variety to sustain interest. Each work responds to the 'affect' of the associated key: from the serenity of C major to the pathos of C minor, from joyful D major to wistful D minor, and so on. Unlike his contemporary William Lawes, though, Jenkins is never ponderous or moody, and these little gems sparkle with contrapuntal bravura, each part bantering in felicitous conversation. Melodies flow like wine and dancing rhythms give way to fleeting moments of quiet reflection.

Phantasm brings its distinctively light, luminous and spectral sound to these busy tapestries, and the consort's translucent textures are enriched in sundry pieces by the velvet warmth of a chamber organ. In the fantasies, the players' lithe articulation propels the music forward with graceful energy, while the two pavans are beautifully poised – tableaux of stillness midst the repartee. The airy recorded sound is expertly balanced. *Kate Bolton-Porciatti*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Mendelssohn

String Quintets Nos 1 & 2
Timothy Ridout (viola), Doric String Quartet
Chandos CHAN 20218 61:31 mins

Mendelssohn's two string quintets come from more or less opposite ends of his career, with the first, in A major, being a product of his miraculous teenage years, and its successor having been composed just two years or so before his death at the age of 38. Mendelssohn subsequently revised the earlier work, discarding its minuet movement and writing in its place a slow Intermezzo in memory of his former violin teacher Eduard Rietz. This is an altogether wonderful work, full of the same youthful exuberance we find in Mendelssohn's famous Octet for strings which he composed shortly before it, and the Doric Quartet with Timothy Ridout make light of its formidable difficulties. Their very effective *pianissimo* playing stands them in particularly good stead in the quietly scurrying scherzo which is first cousin to the similar piece in the Octet; and their energy in the finale's spectacular display of counterpoint is unflagging.

The Op. 87 Quintet has a deeply felt slow movement, but Mendelssohn was unhappy with its finale, and the work wasn't published until after his death. This new recording includes a couple of passages which he deleted, and they undoubtedly make the movement more satisfying. No Mendelssohn lover should be without this disc. *Misha Donat*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Remarkably nuanced: Francesca Dego finds a variety of colour in Mozart

DAVIDE CERATI

Mendelssohn

Violin Sonatas: in F (1820); in F minor, Op. 4; in F, MWV Q7; in D, MWV Q18
Alina Ibragimova (violin), Cédric Tiberghien (piano)
Hyperion CDA68322 66:19 mins

Clean playing from both performers, with light pedalling from Cédric Tiberghien, deals honestly with the two early sonatas and their engaging mixture of Classical and Romantic materials. At the ages of 11 and 14, Mendelssohn was not yet quite up to his Octet standard and some of his endings are formulaic and overlong. But the underlying genius is there for all to hear.

The 1838 Sonata, in which Tiberghien understandably allows himself more generous pedalling, shows Mendelssohn on top form, and surprise has been expressed as to why he never published it. My guess is that, as with the 'Italian' Symphony, he may have felt it still needed one or two tweaks; and, although he did think he might never make old bones, at just 29 he probably did not expect to die at 38. If the work is not played that often, one reason may be, especially at the finale's *Assai vivace* tempo obediently observed here, that it calls for considerable dexterity and stamina. Where the young composer fails to suggest dynamic markings for long stretches, the players are clearly right to invent them, so it's strange that occasionally they ignore rallentandos. Also, in the middle movement of the F minor Sonata, Alina Ibragimova for some reason alters the first two notes of her entry, which should echo the piano's. Most seriously of all, the richer piano textures sometimes obscure the violin. *Roger Nichols*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Mozart

Violin Sonatas Nos 18, 20, 22 & 32
Francesca Dego (violin), Francesca Leonardi (piano)
Chandos CHAN 20232 70:13 mins

It is fascinating to hear just how far performances of Mozart's violin sonatas have changed on a modern set-up since Itzhak Perlman and Daniel Barenboim recorded their distinguished series for Deutsche Grammophon back in the 1980s. Sparkling, full of bonhomie, full-toned and cantabile focused,

their beguilingly affectionate performances fully convey the impression of two old friends enjoying the pleasure of making music together.

Francesca Dego and Francesca Leonardi have also been playing together for many years, and their conveyed delight in each other's musical company is no less infectiously conveyed. Yet they also reflect the way our perceptions have changed as to how this music should sound over the intervening (nearly) four decades. Dego is more lithe-toned than Perlman in his luxurious prime, uses vibrato more selectively and sparingly, encompasses a wider range of dynamics (especially at the lower end of the spectrum) and shapes Mozart's phrasing with piquant delicacy and precision. Leonardi proves the ideal partner, deftly articulating with a lighter touch than Barenboim (left-hand especially), and with less reliance on the sustaining pedal as a source of textural colour.

Repeats provide a relished opportunity for decorative fantasy (the DG team keep pretty much to the printed urtext), and in the case of the G major K301's opening movement, a magical point of piano-trilled repose (second time around) just before the recapitulation gets underway. There is an infectious delight in give-and-take between piano and violin throughout, and in K454 in B flat, which opens the programme, an unmistakable sense of the young Beethoven waiting in the wings. Just a little more 'air' around the instruments would have provided the musical icing on an exquisite recital. *Julian Haylock*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Coco – Origins

L Boulanger: Nocturne; **Debussy:** Beau Soir; **Enescu:** Impressions d'enfance (arr. solo violin); **Hubay:** Fantaisie brillante; **Poulenc:** Violin Sonata; **Ravel:** Violin Sonata in G
Coco Tomita (violin), Simon Callaghan (piano)
Orchid Classics ORC100194 57:45 mins

The Japanese violinist Coco Tomita won the string category of BBC Young Musician of the Year in 2020, and was still a teenager when she recorded this debut recital a year later.

In the opening movement of Ravel's Violin Sonata No. 2 Tomita combines tonal sweetness with a welcome tensile element, interleaving subtly with Simon Callaghan's sensitively calibrated account of the pointillistic piano part. In the central 'Blues' movement Tomita enjoys the jazzy swoops and slides without overdoing them, and her pizzicatos have a crack of emotional urgency to them. The 'Perpetuum mobile' finale can be a babble, but together Tomita and Callaghan hit a groove facilitating both clean articulation and a gathering excitement. This is a fresh, consistently stimulating account of Ravel's sonata, all the more effective for its avoidance of special pleading.

In Poulenc's Violin Sonata sparks fly in the opening movement, as they should, the astringent edges sharpened by Tomita's clean attack and spot-on intonation. From the slow movement she and Callaghan distil an elusive, wistful tenderness, and the finale inks in the elements of tragedy Poulenc wanted, yet it's glintingly alive to his humour too.

Among the shorter pieces Tomita's heartfelt lyricism in Lili Boulanger's Nocturne and Debussy's *Beau soir* catches the ear particularly. Hubay's *Fantaisie brillante* on Bizet's *Carmen* demonstrates Tomita's virtuoso credentials, although the piece itself is instantly expendable. Overall, though, this is a richly promising recording debut. *Terry Blain*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Horn & Piano

– A Cor Basse Recital

Beethoven: Horn Sonata; **Danzi:** Horn Sonata; **Punto:** Horn Concerto No. 1; **Ries:** Horn Sonata
Teunis van der Zwart (horn), Alexander Melnikov (piano)
Harmonia Mundi HMM 905351 74:20 mins

Teunis van der Zwart catches the Beethoven Sonata's bold outgoing start, and uses open and stopped notes to add character and colour. He says that the whole programme is a tribute to Giovanni Punto, whose playing inspired Beethoven in the first place, and he makes the case for ornamentation in the repeats, a line which Alexander Melnikov also follows, and which never becomes excessive nor gratuitous from either player.

Punto's favoured instrument was the cor basse, and Van der Zwart adopts a wide mouthpiece to create what he describes as a more velvety sound in the low register. In the Ries, that's echoed by the round and fruity bass of the fortepiano, a different instrument from the one in the other works. It's also better balanced in the texture: coming to the Punto directly afterwards, the keyboard is slightly too distant, as it was at the start of the Beethoven. On the evidence of this concerto, Punto wasn't the most interesting of composers, and much of the work shows off technique, rather than having any substance. It does give Van der Zwart a chance to play a few horn chords in the cadenza, although these are tamer than his note might suggest.

Musically, the Danzi doesn't evade sequence and formula, but the performers are alert to expressive opportunities, especially in rhythm and pulse, which never become straitjacketed. This can lead to loss of ensemble, but better that than robotic slavery to the metronome. *Martin Cotton*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Origines & départs

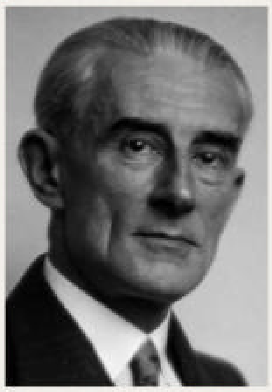
– French Works for Clarinet & Piano

Chausson: Andante et Allegro; **Honegger:** Sonatine; **Poulenc:** Clarinet Sonata; **Saint-Saëns:** Clarinet Sonata; **plus short pieces by Debussy, Gaubert, McGuire, Pierné and Trujillo**
Maximiliano Martín (clarinet), Scott Mitchell (piano)
Delphian DCD34280 68:25 mins

We're told there's no disputing over tastes, but I confess I don't much like Maximiliano Martín's tone in louder passages: for me, it's a touch 'hooty'. He's at his considerable best in more 'left-field' pieces – an interesting 'Souvenir' by the Tenerife-born Gustavo Trujillo and the jazzy finale of Honegger's Sonatine. Saint-Saëns's Sonata also comes over well, with its extraordinary way of using an almost entirely 19th-century vocabulary to produce music that couldn't possibly have emerged from that period.

Two major problems are the duo's cavalier treatment of tempo and especially dynamics. Debussy's *Petite Pièce*, a sight-reading exercise, packs any amount of nuanced feeling into its tiny frame, and the slowing down in the final bars is crucial in setting a seal of tenderness on the whole. Ignoring this, as here, writes the ending off as perfunctory. In the Poulenc Sonata dynamics are crucial. In Boulez's eyes, Poulenc was a typical Frenchman through what he condemned as 'writing in blocks'. Well, this may not have suited Boulez, but Poulenc gives life to the blocks by his variation of dynamics. In this Sonata, two bars of *ppp* aside, there are five levels from *pp* to *ff*, the composer indulging in a kind of oratory that ranges from whispering, murmuring, stating and insisting to shouting. These levels absolutely must be observed. Also the piano's accompanimental patterns are at times clattery, ignoring Poulenc's insistence that these be softened by the 'rich sauce' of the sustaining pedal. *Roger Nichols*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★



BACKGROUND TO…
Ravel's *Violin Sonata No. 2*

Composed over four years (1923-27), this relatively short work finds Ravel intent on pushing both players and listeners to the limit. Dedicated to violinist Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, whom he accompanied, the work sees violin and piano almost at odds with each other. Ravel continued to be inspired by jazz and was determined to make a case for it as a serious evolutionary step in music with pieces such as this, but took so long to finish the Sonata that Jourdan-Morhange retired before she could play it. The 1927 premiere was performed by George Enescu, alongside Ravel himself.

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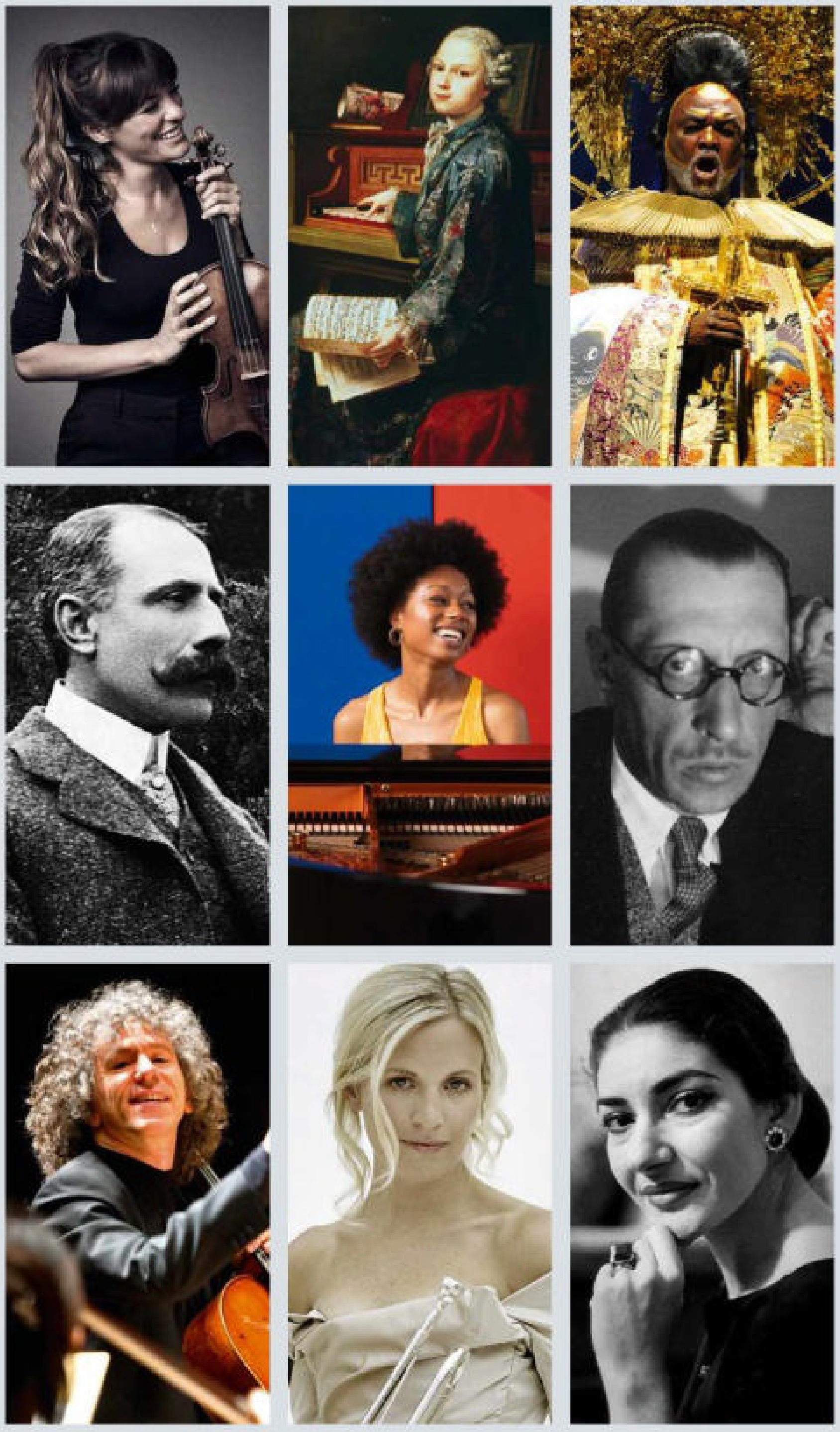

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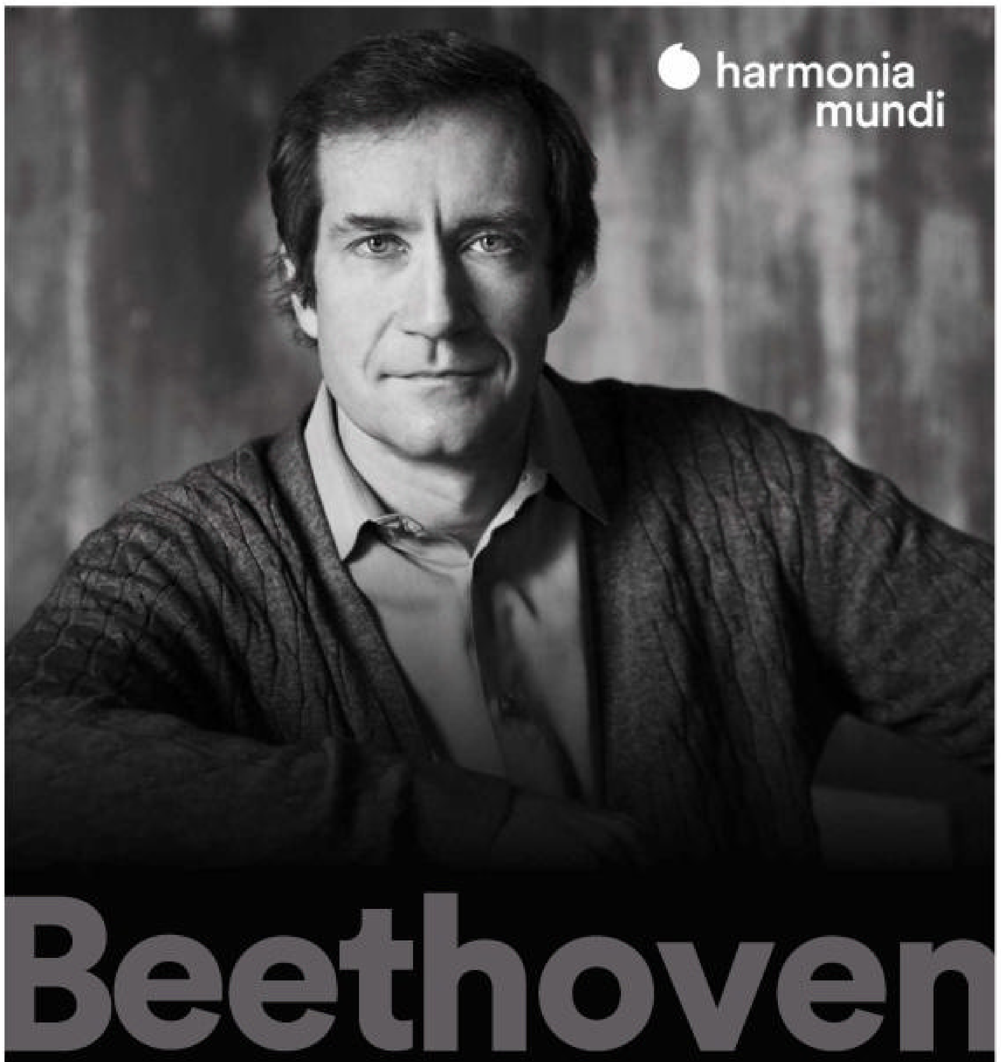

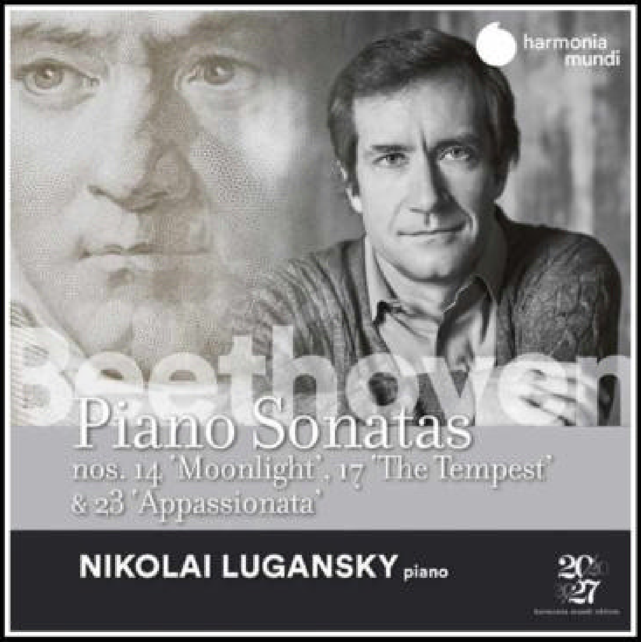

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HMM 902442

Piano Sonatas
nos. 14 'Moonlight', 17 'The Tempest'
& 23 'Appassionata'

NIKOLAI LUGANSKY

For this second volume of Beethoven sonatas, Nikolaï Lugansky goes back in time and selects three milestones in the composer's stylistic evolution: the 'Moonlight', the 'Tempest' and the 'Appassionata'. The Master of Bonn gradually broke with the models he had inherited from the codes of Viennese Classicism in order to give free rein to affect, emotion and Romantic gesture. With these three works, Beethoven laid the foundations of a free and humanistic art.

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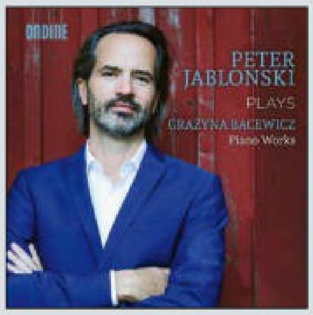
INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE



Jablonski's Bacewicz bursts with energy

The pianist's view of these works is a commanding one, says ***Rebecca Franks***

Bacewicz

Piano Sonatas Nos 1 & 2; 10 Concert Etudes for Piano; Etudes in Double Notes; Concert Krakowiak
Peter Jablonski (piano)
Ondine ODE 1399-2 71:24 mins

Grażyna Bacewicz (1909-69) was one of Poland's leading composers, a fine concert pianist and a professional violinist. She credited her productivity to having a 'motorek', or little engine, that kept her going. She was fast, energetic, focused. And although there's a risk in conflating biography and music, it's hard not to hear that propulsive drive at play in the Ten Concert Etudes of 1956-57, performed with muscular conviction by Swedish pianist Peter Jablonski.

He's the latest in a series of pianists giving overdue attention to Bacewicz, with Krystian Zimerman's 2011 recording of the Second Piano Sonata (Deutsche Grammophon) a landmark, and recent discs from Ewa Kupiec (Hänssler), Morta Grigaliūnaitė (Piano Classics) and Joanna Sochacka (Dux). This latest offering from Jablonski is well worth hearing: it's intelligently played and sensitively recorded.

Aside from the Ten Etudes, which put Jablonski through his technical paces, the programme includes the lively *Concert Krakowiak* (1949), the Etudes in Double Notes (1955) and, best of all, the two piano sonatas. There's a sense of Bacewicz's compositional imagination really taking wing in these pieces, and Jablonski commits to her vision. The First Sonata feels full of ambition, and Jablonski draws out all of its rhythmic and emotional complexity.

The Ten Etudes put Jablonski through his technical paces

He also draws out the brooding moods of the Second Sonata's opening movement, which gives way to a contemplative *Largo*, its chorale chords beautifully balanced by Jablonski. And the piece ends – how else? – with a dancing finale that bursts with energy.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

A feeling for Bacewicz: Peter Jablonski draws out rhythm and emotion

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JS Bach

Goldberg Variations, BWV 988
Jean Rondeau (harpsichord)
Erato 9029650811 107:12 mins (2 discs)

Jean Rondeau, a prominent figure of the *nouvelle vague* of harpsichordists, adopts a spacious approach to Bach's inspired and masterly Variations. Not for him is Gustav Leonhardt's almost invariable disdain for repeats, for all are scrupulously observed in this two-disc album. Rondeau's responses to the music are, by-and-large, reflective and notably free from superficial showiness. For the most part his tempos feel carefully considered and are well judged, and his articulation all that we should expect from an eloquently punctuated and inflected conversation. Intimacy, clarity and faithfulness to Bach's music, as Rondeau understands it, are self-declared aims, laid out in the accompanying booklet, in which two consecutive, almost entirely blank pages each contain one word, *silence* and *stille*. Make of that what you will; readers of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* will know what I mean.

There is a marked rhetorical slant to Rondeau's overview of the *Goldbergs*. His presentation of the Aria is full of consequence, and his narration of what follows is effective. The profound 25th Variation is commendably limpid and rhythmically supple, further benefitting from the beautifully recorded sound of the harpsichord, built in 2006 after German models. The merits of this instrument are on display throughout, as in the bell-like resonances in the upper register of Variations 14 and 26. Occasionally I sensed over-weightiness, as in Variation 24, and in an absurdly ponderous and humourless Quodlibet (Variation 30), but exhilarating moments are to be found in the robust giga of Variation 7, the joyful Variations 28 and 29 and the lightly ornamented Aria da capo. *Nicholas Anderson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Brahms

Late Piano Works, Opp. 116-119
Paul Lewis (piano)
Harmonia Mundi HMM 902365 73:37 mins

These 20 pieces constitute Brahms's farewell to his own instrument, the piano. 'The cradle songs of my sufferings' was how he once described the three Intermezzos Op. 117, and although only the first of them is an actual lullaby there's a haunting sense of nostalgia and sadness running through all of them. Paul Lewis conveys the music's intimate nature admirably, and he's also

well attuned to the obverse side of Brahms – the intense passion of such pieces as the first of the Opp. 116 and 118 series.

Only in the opening Intermezzo of the last set, Op. 119, it is possible to feel that Lewis doesn't quite penetrate to the heart of the music. It's a piece saturated with those chains of descending thirds which in late Brahms seem to portend death, and, as he told Clara Schumann, he wanted it played as slowly as possible. Lewis's tempo here is more akin to a flowing *Andante* than a true *Adagio*, and it doesn't really allow sufficient time and space for the atmosphere of haunting melancholy to carry its full weight. But for the rest, these are first-rate performances, fully able to hold their own against the formidable competition in this repertoire. *Misha Donat*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★

RECORDING ★★★★★

Chopin

Piano Sonata No. 3; Fantasy in F minor, Op. 49; Nocturnes, Opp. 48 & 62

Ivo Pogorelich (piano)

Sony Classical 19439912052 63:09 mins

Never far away from controversy at any stage of his career, Ivo Pogorelich hit the headlines early, when at the 1980 Chopin Competition in Warsaw his failure to make the final round led Martha Argerich to resign from the jury, protesting its treatment of the pianist she called a 'genius'. He has divided opinion ever since, and remains a sad casualty of his own narcissism and the music industry itself. This latest comeback by the now reclusive Croatian pianist, his fifth Chopin disc, does little to change things.

Pogorelich's noticeably short programme has its interesting moments, but all the works have been better served by countless other pianists. Everything here is mature Chopin – 'late' is a relative term when talking of a composer who died so young – and the earliest piece is the opening Nocturne in C minor, Op. 48 No. 1. In both his chosen Nocturnes, Pogorelich allows bel canto lines to sag, and his prosaic and square performances are hardly helped by a slightly brittle recorded sound. Generally he is at his best in slow music, and has something to say in the introverted, ruminative moments of the Fantasy in F minor, but the faster episodes sound mechanical when they are not unsteady. The same applies to his Sonata No. 3 in B minor, which in places he pulls around to bangy effect yet in more measured moments is convincing enough. Pogorelich is now a shadow of the talent — however eccentric — that can still be heard on his early recordings. *John Allison*

PERFORMANCE ★★

RECORDING ★★★

Unshowy Goldbergs: Jean Rondeau colours well within Bach's lines

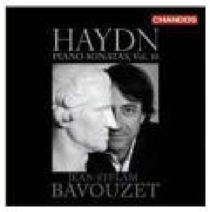
MATHIAS BENGUIGUI, GETTY

Haydn

Piano Sonatas, Vol. 10: Nos 3, 4, 28, 45 & 60; Arietta con 12 Variazioni

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet (piano)

Chandos CHAN 20191 71:31 mins



Haydn's piano sonatas are numerous (note, this is the tenth volume), inspired and lyrical, but peculiarly tricky to programme. Much of that is down to their necessarily intimate scale; since they were designed for 18th-century instruments and for practising at home or performing in, at most, an aristocratic salon, their natural setting is far indeed from any typical modern concert hall or piano. One of the best ways to enjoy them now is in Jean-Efflam Bavouzet's ongoing series of recordings, and this latest is a splendid addition, including at its heart one of the most engaging of all the works, the late C major Sonata No. 60.

Bavouzet captures much of the essential 'Papa Haydn' style behind these works. Measured, lively, sparkling and beautifully phrased, his playing is unimpeachable. Alongside oodles of charm, there is an unfailing brilliance to his articulation, and although the external grace and rather manicured elegance of the Enlightenment era is always evident, you sometimes sense it masks a spirit of wit and verve that's itching to break free – try the rhythms that spring like March hares through the C major Sonata (No. 60), for instance. The long chain of variations that attend the closing *Arietta* can nevertheless start to feel ever so slightly as if Haydn was writing on autopilot; here Bavouzet finds a good balance, keeping a rigorously focused approach, but eschewing any temptation to rock the boat by adding extremities. The recorded sound is top-notch, with sharp clarity and just the right amount of bloom. *Jessica Duchen*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★

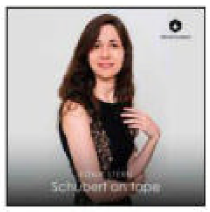
RECORDING ★★★★★

Schubert

4 Impromptus, D899; Six Moments Musicaux, D780

Edna Stern (piano)

Orchid Classics ORC100192 53:38 mins



My most treasured CD is part of the much-vaunted 'Great Pianists of the 20th Century' series put together by the top brains of the record industry in 1999. On it, Alfred Cortot comes hopelessly to grief in the rapid opening flourishes of *Kreisleriana*, not just once, but worsening with each reiteration: diddly-diddly-diddly-diddly-*splat*! It's wonderfully comic. Anguished execs sent urgent recall messages – 'It was a mistake!!' But my copy was too precious to send back. There's no place for flawed humanity in the patched recordings of today.

Edna Stern eloquently makes this point in the liner to her album *Schubert on Tape*, though not to exonerate herself for wrong notes. She recalls listening to the first edit of her Schumann disc: 'I was shocked to encounter an interpretation that I myself could never have played, or even imagined.' It felt 'like a monster, some hybrid creature constructed from bits and pieces' assembled

BACKGROUND TO...

Schubert's *Six Moments Musicaux*

This set of short piano solos was brought together for publication in 1828, the year Schubert died. They were not conceived as a set, however, with the third and sixth pieces being composed individually a few years earlier, and released as part of popular collections of works to be performed at home. Indeed, the eventual set – which Schubert completed in late 1827 – was perfect for domestic performance. Perhaps deceptive in their seeming simplicity, these 'Musical Moments' are full of great character and have surprising emotional depths.

by someone else. She likens the difference between a patched digital recording and an analogue one to the difference between a human and a robot. Unless we're doing a Warhol, we don't Photoshop a Cézanne. So this recording was made directly to tape, with no editing.

You could put it another way – it's simply a live recording. That's how I listen to it, and on the whole it's an interesting piece of work. It's Stern's interpretation, rather than anything mechanical, which prevents my enjoying the fourth Impromptu, and which irritates me at the mannered opening of the first *Moment Musicaux*. Otherwise there is much to enjoy here: the grave beauty of the first Impromptu, the eager warmth of the third, the charm of the fourth *Moment Musicaux*, and the understated but poignant regret of the final one. Schubert wrote all this music as he was dying, and here we sense that. *Michael Church*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Scriabin

Mazurkas

Andrey Gugnin (piano)
Hyperion CDA68355 75:09 mins

As Andrey Gugnin turns to Scriabin, there's little if any of the turbulence he handled so fearlessly in his debut disc of Shostakovich sonatas. For Scriabin, as for Chopin – the Russian's point of departure here – the mazurka form is not a pretext for pretty salon pieces but a means of introspective experimentation. Gugnin takes risks in making the Op. 3 set of ten so very interior; the many dying falls can produce a hypnotic spell dangerously close to torpor. Yet the unpredictable use of rubato and the sudden inward retreats keep soporific melancholy at bay.

Nearly a decade later, in 1898-99, Scriabin had a wider range of emotions to convey in the nine mazurkas of Op. 25, and a more unorthodox approach to the dance form, making them more companionable as a sequence. Octaves in the bass suggest an occasional intruding fate, and more *fortissimo* passages intrude, which Gugnin always scales down, but there is such virginal candour in the reveries – No. 2 is a meditative, luminous highlight, while No. 8

Soundworlds to discover: Rebeca Omordia lifts the lid on African piano music

FOUR CHIEFS MEDIA

offers the best of both worlds – and the pianist handles them with exquisite sensibility. Sometimes I wish for a bit more of the clarity and less veiled upper register Peter Jablonski brings to the set in a strong recent contender on Ondine, but Gugnin's journey to the centre of Scriabin's refined, poetic essence offers other virtues. I'd love to hear what he makes of the ten piano sonatas, another journey of a soul spanning the composer's entire creative life. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Weinberg

Sonatas for Solo Violin Nos 1-3

Gidon Kremer (violin)
ECM 485 6943 62:41 mins

Weinberg's three sonatas for unaccompanied violin make for some pretty uncompromising listening. The sequence of jagged dissonant double stops that opens the First Sonata of 1964 sets a mood of unbridled anger and aggression which surfaces from time to time throughout the rest of these works. Linus Roth, who has made an excellent recording of this music for Challenge Classics, cites such moments as suggesting that the violin is 'being drawn up against its grain, much like an unwilling cat against the lie of its fur.'

But Weinberg explores a much wider palette of emotions than such a remark would suggest. Following the blistering opening movement, we get a warmly tender *Andante* and a gently playful *Allegretto* before the dark clouds re-emerge with an intense and deeply felt *Lento* and a relentless *moto perpetuo* finale.

Likewise, the Second Sonata, which was written three years later, covers a tremendous amount of ground in its seven short and succinctly argued movements. Yet perhaps the toughest nut of all is the Third Sonata composed in the late 1970s and conceived in an extended, unbroken and emotionally intense one-movement structure.

Gidon Kremer's marvellous recording of the Third Sonata for ECM resurfaces here alongside its newly engineered companions which needless to say receive strongly committed and viscerally exciting performances. Even for Weinberg aficionados, it's probably advisable, however, to hear these thorny works separately to maximise their impact. Alternatively, Roth cleverly lightens the mood in his recording by interspersing an arrangement for violin and piano of one of Shostakovich's *Three Fantastic Dances* between each Sonata. *Erik Levi*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

African Pianism

Works by Bankole, Benabdeljalil, D Earl, Euba, Nketia, Onyeji and Onovwerosuoke

Rebeca Omordia (piano)
SOMM Recordings SOMMCD 0647 77:30 mins

In the mid 20th century, the legacy of imperial Victoriana blended with traditional African soundworlds to produce an extraordinary style of music. This repertoire was largely unknown in the UK until Nigerian-Romanian pianist Rebeca Omordia recently introduced key composers. Omordia's second album takes its title from a collection of 12 pedagogical pieces written by JH Kwabena Nketia when the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana was established in the 1960s. The four featured here are written in the style of intermediate-level Classical hits but with a focus on distinctive African rhythms. *Volta Fantasy*, otherwise free-flowing and melodic, is enhanced by a percussive undertone. This idea is taken further by Christian Onyeji, who transfers Nigerian drumming patterns to the piano; Omordia effectively turns the instrument into a piece of tuned percussion. The three-movement semi-improvisatory dance *Ufie* recalls Steve Reich's similar approach when incorporating Ghanaian techniques into *Drumming*.

Ayo Bankole's *Egun Variations* is a step change. The exploratory harmonic language evokes Chopin and Nigerian folk song (with a hint of 'Morning Has Broken'). Nabil Benabdeljalil's Nocturnes also take their lead from Chopin, imbued with a modal character indicative of the composer's native Morocco. The added percussion in *En attente du printemps* is a distraction.

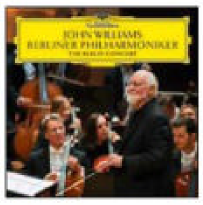
Trout have inspired both Schubert and David Earl, whose 'Princess Rainbow' from *Scenes from a South African Childhood* evokes pastoral scenes of the Jonkershoek Valley, where the young Earl played pretend fishing. Omordia's liquid touch successfully creates the watery effects – listeners must decide whether the frenetic ending heralds escape or capture. *Claire Jackson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

Michael Beek highlights some recent releases of music for film and television

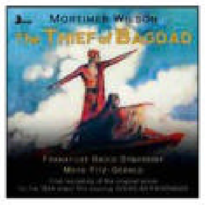
April round-up

John Williams is having something of a European moment. Following on from his hugely successful Vienna concert in 2020, the now 90-year-old returned across the pond for ***The Berlin Concert*** in late 2021. DG have gone all out in documenting what was another prestigious career high for Williams, releasing the performance in full on CD, Blu-ray and Vinyl.



Williams presides over the Berlin players with a firm hand and a twinkle in his eye. Pleasingly, the programme varies enough from the Vienna set, with Williams's *1997 Elegy* (performed by principal cellist Bruno Delepelaire) a moving highlight. *(DG 486 2003)* ★★★★★

Less than two weeks before Williams was born, ***Mortimer Wilson*** died. An American classical composer who also penned scores for a clutch of silent films in the '20s, he may be best known for Douglas Fairbanks's ***The Thief of Bagdad*** (1924). This 2019 live recording represents painstaking



work by Mark Fitz-Gerald, who reconstructed the music from what was little more than a piano score and Wilson's original notes on the project. Written at a time when most films were served by compiled scores of tunes by various composers, this really is one of the finest examples of early original film music. Wilson's score is evocative and thrillingly performed – despite the odd intrusive live sound effect. *(First Hand Records FHR126)* ★★★★★

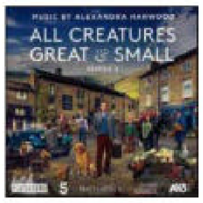
Move – The Trumpet As Movie Star sees ***Romain Leleu*** put the instrument front and centre in a selection of pieces originating in, mostly, European cinema. In some ways it's an odd mix, the title work being a concerto by Baptiste Trotignon – a very cinematic piece, so you can understand the train of thought. Obscure items like Ibrahim Maalouf's theme from *In the Forests of Siberia* (2016) sit alongside Irving Berlin's 'Cheek to Cheek' (with a rather thin vocal).

The winning items, though, are the pieces by Miles Davis and Michel Legrand, plus a suite of music from Nino Rota's *The Godfather*. Leleu is a dazzling soloist throughout. *(Harmonia Mundi HMM902600)* ★★★

A film destined for cricital acclaim and audience amour, Joe Wright's ***Cyrano*** features a powerful soundtrack of original music and songs by The National's ***Bryce and Aaron Dessner, Matt Berninger and Carin Besser***. This big-screen retelling of *Cyrano de Bergerac* is a musical, delivered with a rawness of emotion that makes it stand out. The Dessners' music is typical of the luscious soundscapes their fans have come to know – not to mention Bryce's prior screen works. Víkingur Ólafsson's piano

and the London Contemporary Orchestra paint a vivid soundworld, but it's the songs that impress the most. Peter Dinklage's lead vocal may be gritty and imperfect, but that makes this all the more powerful. *(Decca 385 1879)* ★★★★

Channel 5's ***All Creatures Great and Small*** is the small-screen reboot we never knew we needed. The original BBC series, based on James Herriot's colourful tales of life as a Yorkshire vet, was massively popular for 12 years and so this new series had a lot to live up to. Johnny Pearson's main title music



in the BBC series is hard to beat, and ***Alexandra Harwood*** sticks close to the spirit of that. Her original scores (here from Series 2) are filled with warm orchestration, sweet melody and just a dose of pathos – perfectly pitched for cosy Sunday-night viewing. *(Silva Screen SILCD1664)* ★★★★

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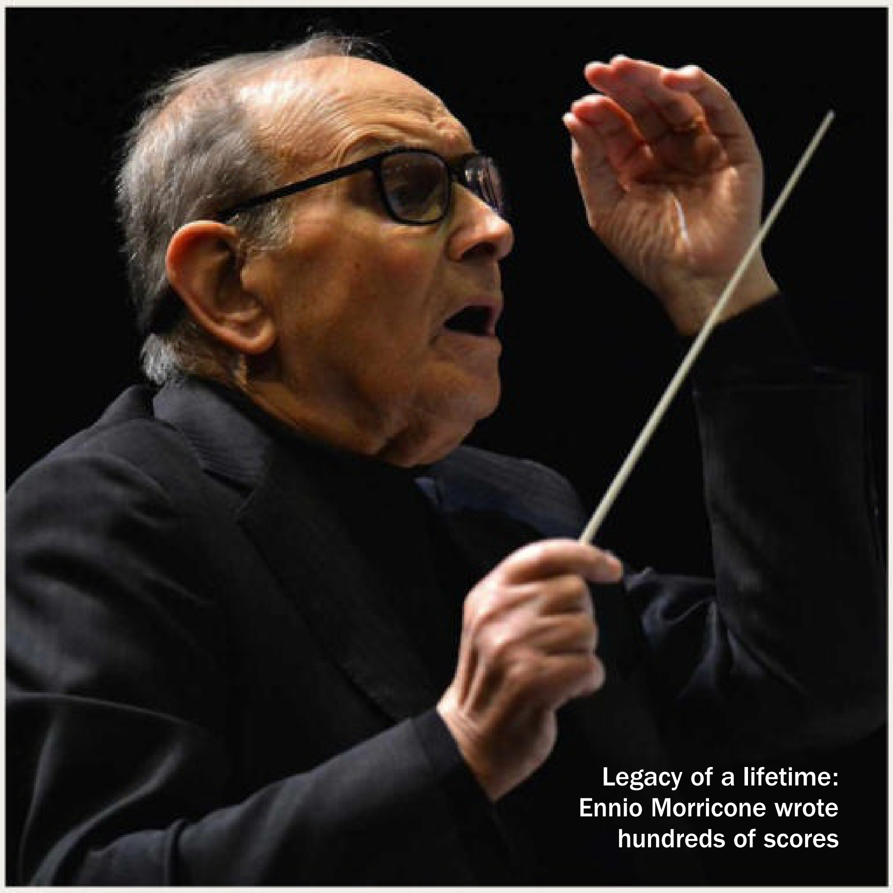
SCREEN CHOICE

Morricone Memories

This personal tribute to the late composer by violinist Marco Serino is filled with treasures



Legacy of a lifetime: Ennio Morricone wrote hundreds of scores

Morricone

Cinema Suites for Violin and Orchestra

Marco Serino (violin); Orchestra Haydn di Bolzano e Trento/Andrea Morricone

Arcana A495 64:02

Ennio Morricone's contribution to cinema was massive, with hundreds of scores for the big and small screen. Many went under the radar outside of Italy, while others broke new ground and remain firmly fixed in popular culture. Though Morricone regarded his screen music differently to his 'absolute' compositions, the two came together increasingly in recent decades as 'Il Maestro' took his music into concert halls and arenas around the world. One man who was with him almost every step of the way was violinist Marco Serino, to whom Morricone dedicated a number of works and arrangements. This album gathers suites of the composer's film music, arranged for violin and orchestra. Morricone finished work on the suites just months before his death, and so this recording is a loving tribute by Serino. There's an air of great respect and humility in the performances, conducted by Morricone's son, Andrea, while the music bears all the hallmarks of the man himself. Themes from the likes *Cinema Paradiso, The Mission* and *Once Upon a Time in America* are rich in emotional colour and unforgettable melodies. ★★★★★

Brief notes

Our selection this month features curves, concertos, Copland and Carpenters

Beethoven Piano Concertos Nos 2 & 5 (arr. chamber)
Hanna Shybayeva (piano) et al
Naxos 8.551452

Beethoven piano concertos in chamber arrangements is an interesting idea, but ultimately feels a little weak, here. The piano dominates a score never designed for chamber ensemble. Still, the playing is top notch, and there is often charm and subtlety in the rejigged orchestral parts. (CS) ★★★★

Sarah Class Resonate
Orchestra for the Earth et al
Glorious Technicolour GLORIOCD2

Class's talent for affecting melody is proven in commissions for the World Land Trust and HRH the Prince of Wales's 'Terra Carta' project. From inspiring orchestral anthems to soulful solo piano, via a clutch of beautiful songs, this is a vivid and memorable collection. (MB) ★★★★

Dvořák String Quartets Nos 2 & 5 etc
Vogler Quartet *CPO 555 451-2*

The Vogler Quartet has a keen, sweet sound, though wanting slightly in depth – the performances are nicely delineated, but the first violin tends to dominate. The real treat is the *Terzetto*, scored for two violins and viola, which suits the group's preference for the higher register. (CS) ★★★

Elgar String Quartet etc (arr. orchestra)
English String Orchestra et al
Lyrita SRCD.394

Orchestrated arrangements of Elgar's String Quartet and eleven shorter works are heard here. While better recordings may exist of some of the more famous pieces, there is a stellar offering from cellist Raphael Wallfisch, whose playing is lyrical and powerful. (FP) ★★★★

Erkin • Khachaturian Piano Concertos
Gülsin Onay (piano); Bilkent Symphony Orchestra/José Serebrier
Gramola GRAM98025

A splendidly feisty performance of Khachaturian's Piano Concerto has the added bonus of the often omitted flexatone in the central movement. Erkin's equally fiery Piano Concerto is also well worth discovering. (JP) ★★★★

Gipps Piano and Chamber Works
Duncan Honeybourne (piano) et al
Prima Facie PFCD171

Following Gipps's centenary last year, there has been something of a reckoning, with her music finally given the platform it deserves. *Opalescence* is a worthy addition, presenting a selection of chamber and piano works, many of which are premiere recordings. (FP) ★★★

Glazunov • Tchaikovsky Violin Concertos
Ivan Pochekin (violin) et al
Profil Hänssler PH21052

Pochekin takes the Tchaikovsky Concerto at a very stately pace in a performance that's more deliberate than exciting, though every note is as clear as a bell. His tone is particularly dark and rich in the lower register, and lends itself well to the Glazunov concerto's melodrama. (CS) ★★★

Michał Górczyński Regions
Michał Górczyński (bass clarinet)
Unzipped Fly RP05

This is wild. Polish bass clarinettist Górczyński is known for his experimental streak, and that is on display here as he filters Polish folk melodies through various levels of improv and musical daring. At best it's thrillingly evocative; at worst it sounds like an angry Elephant calf. (MB) ★★★

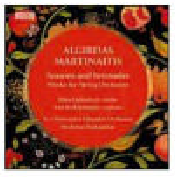
Kārlis Lācis Piano Concerto; Latvian Symphony
Agnese Eglina (piano) et al
SKANI LMIC133

Kārlis Lācis chucks everything bar the kitchen sink into his orchestral scores – including a prepared piano in the third movement of the Piano Concerto. His Latvian Symphony is equally extravagant, not to mention eclectic in style, but also quite fun. (JP) ★★★

Dana Lyn A Point On a Slow Curve
Patricia Brennan (cello) et al
In a Circle ICR022

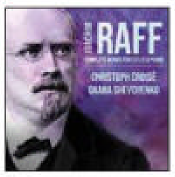
A sonic poem to late artist Jay DeFeo and her monumental creation *The Rose*, Dana Lyn's labour of love is inspired by DeFeo's eight-year artistic struggle. The result breaks the music mould – voices, violin, vibraphone (and the rest). An unusual melting pot. (MB) ★★★

Algirdas Martinaitis Works for String Orchestra
St Christopher Chamber Orchestra et al
Ondine ODE 1398-2



There's all sorts going on in Martinaitis's *Three M'art Comedy Seasons*, including glimpses of tango to clever allusions to Vivaldi. His other works, however, show there's more to the Lithuanian than just a sense of ironic playfulness. (JP) ★★★

Raff Cello and Piano Works
Christoph Croisé (cello), Oxana Shevchenko (piano)
Avie AV2490



Swiss cellist Croisé turns his attention to the works of his 19th-century compatriot. Though prolific during his lifetime, Raff is largely forgotten today which, on the strength of these lyrical and passionate works, is an unfair omission. Croisé's tone is warm and free, while pianist Shevchenko matches him with beautiful fluidity. A joy. (CS) ★★★★★

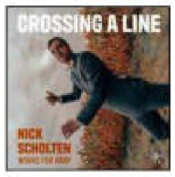
Thomson Complete Chamber Works
Monadnock Music/Gil Rose
Everbest Music and Media EVERBEST1001

From his inventive picture portraits of friends to the longer string quartets, Virgil Thomson's style here is tonal, accessible and packed with character and wit. A fine introduction to an important 20th-century American voice. (JP) ★★★★

America Works by Copland, F Price et al
Daniel Hope (violin) et al *DG 486 2153*

If you're after a bit of escapism and lush orchestrations, Daniel Hope provides it in spades. He's joined by vocals, piano, jazz trio, chamber orchestra and percussion in these frothy arrangements of American music. (FP) ★★★

Crossing a Line Works by Tournier, Salzedo et al
Nick Scholten (harp)
Odradek Records ODRCD420



Works by three leading French harpist-composers give an intriguing guide to how the instrument's techniques and sounds developed – sometimes surprisingly – in the early 20th century. Nick Scholten's playing is impressive throughout. (JP) ★★★★

Early Moderns – The (very) First Viennese School Works by Schmelzer, Fux, Buonamente et al
Quicksilver *Quicksilver QS1003*

The North American ensemble asks us to reassess what we know of Vienna's music-making, as it shines a light on the music of the Viennese courts of the 17th century, long before Mozart and Schoenberg appeared. Sumptuous performances, warmly recorded, and plenty to discover. (MB) ★★★★

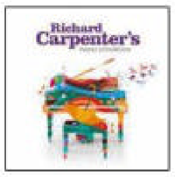
Hello Darkness
Works by Berg, Randy Newman, R Schumann, Ives, Billie Eilish
Olivia Vermeulen (mezzo), Jan Philip Schulze (piano/organ)
Challenge Classics CC72887

Vermeulen presents an 'ode to death': a dark programme of lieder and songs by the likes of Cage, Ives and even Billie Eilish. The eclectic programme occasionally jars, but there's nevertheless much to enjoy. (FP) ★★★

Queen of Hearts Piano Trios by Helen Grime, Nico Muhly et al
Claremont Trio *Tria Records TR3863*

This album features six commissions. Gabriela Lena Frank's *Four Folk Songs* are lyrical and melancholy, Helen Grime's *Three Whistler Miniatures* highlight contrasting textures and Nico Muhly's *Common Ground* holds much rhythmic interest. The album has a contemplative quality, though lacking somewhat in drama and direction. (CS) ★★★

Richard Carpenter's Piano Songbook Various Works
Richard Carpenter (piano)
Decca 3850030



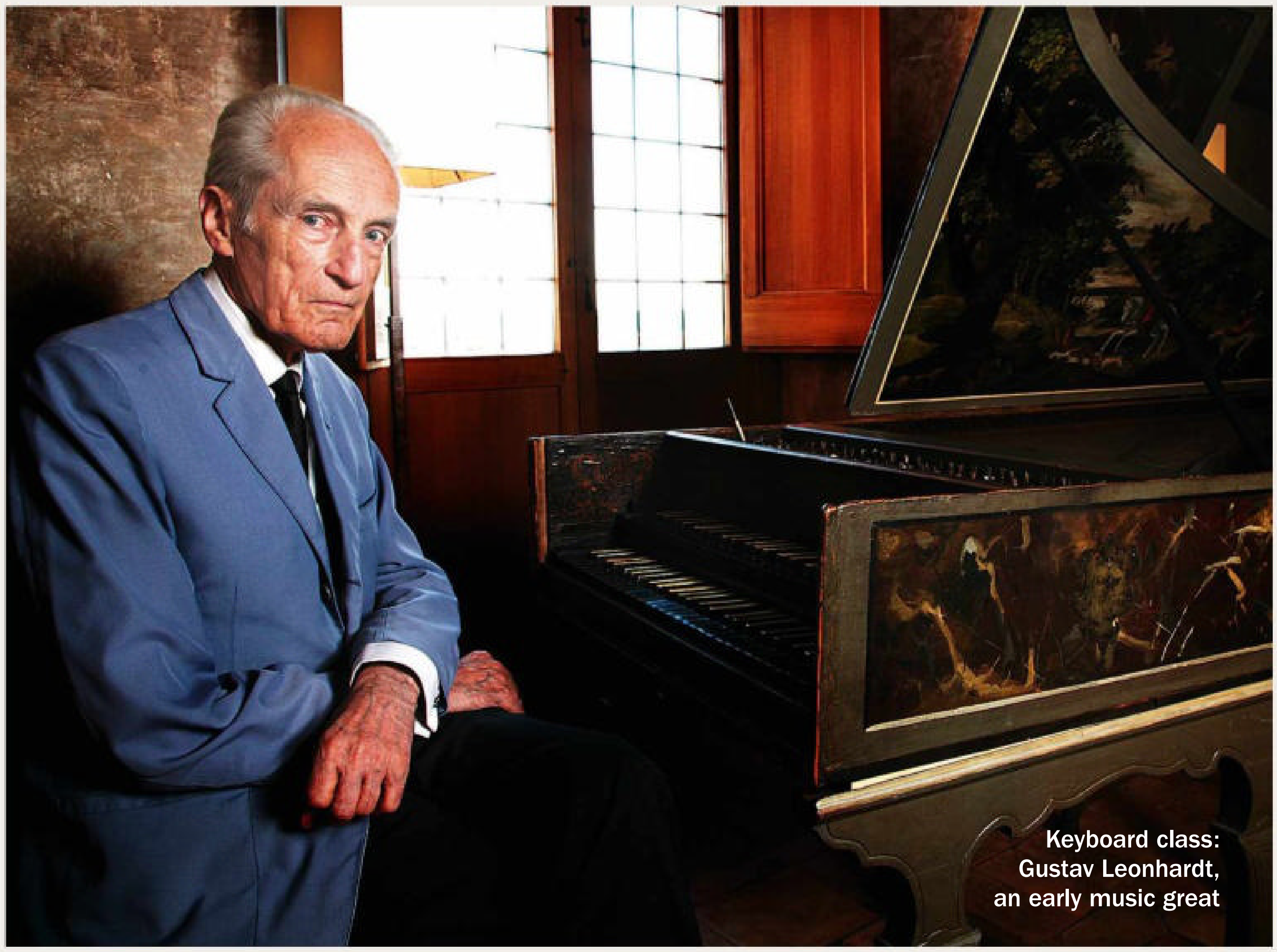
The surviving half of pop sensation The Carpenters arranges and performs this set of classic tunes from their back catalogue. The melodies are evergreen and it's hard not to try and sing along, but Carpenter explores their piano possibilities with great flair and just a hint of misty-eyed nostalgia. (MB) ★★★

Young Composers Scheme, Vol. 3
Works by Kristina Arakelyan et al
National Youth Choir of Great Britain
NMC DL3048

This latest offering from the choir's young composers looks at themes of racial identity, the natural environment and coming out as LGBTQ+. While the compositional voices might not be fully developed, the pieces are given considered, lyrical first outings. (FP) ★★★

Reviewers: *Michael Beek* ***(MB),*** *Freya Parr* ***(FP),*** *Jeremy Pound* ***(JP),*** *Charlotte Smith* ***(CS)***

The month in box-sets



Keyboard class: Gustav Leonhardt, an early music great

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Choral and keyboard legends at large

This month's round-up celebrates Gustav Leonhardt and Olivier Latry

Even with its 35 discs, ***The New Gustav Leonhardt Edition*** *(Warner Classics 9029646771)* barely scratches the surface of the late keyboardist's massive recorded legacy. A true pioneer of Early Music, Leonhardt made some 200 recordings between the early 1950s and the mid-2000s. This set takes in some classic 1960s/'70s sessions for Telefunken, plus late '80s renderings for EMI and Virgin Veritas. Sixteen discs of JS Bach crown the collection, which features music by everyone from Byrd to Scarlatti.

Released to mark his 60th birthday, ***Olivier Latry – Complete Recordings on Deutsche Grammophon*** *(DG 486 1466)* brings together recordings made by the organist from 2000-03. It's a fabulous document of the great Cavaillé-Coll organ at Notre-Dame Cathedral, which thankfully survived the 2019 blaze that otherwise devastated the Paris landmark. The compete organ works of Messiaen fill half of the ten-disc set, which features works by JS Bach, Franck, Mozart, Berlioz, Rachmaninov, Prokofiev, Liszt, Wagner and Alkan.

> It's a fabulous document of Notre-Dame's great Cavaillé-Coll organ

Another precious document takes in 14 years of recordings by Stephen Cleobury and the Choir of King's College, Cambridge. ***The Complete Argo Recordings*** *(Decca 485 2060)* is a 20-disc collection of recordings made by the choir from 1983-97. Suffice to say it's a real feast for King's fans with so much more than the obligatory Christmas music. The set takes in masses by Mozart, Handel oratorios and works by the likes of Tallis, Lassus, Vivaldi, Howells and Maxwell Davies – to name a few.

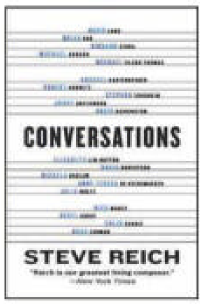
Though he was never affiliated with a symphony orchestra, conductor Hans Knappertsbusch certainly recorded more than his fair share of orchestral repertoire. In ***Hans Knappertsbusch – The Orchestral Edition*** *(Eloquence 4841824),* listeners are treated to 18 discs of recordings made largely from 1949-63. Highlights include Beethoven and Brahms piano concertos with Clifford Curzon, and 1927-28 recordings of Wagner with the Berlin Philharmonic. Fans of his opera recordings can seek out Eloquence's ***The Opera Edition***, too.

Books

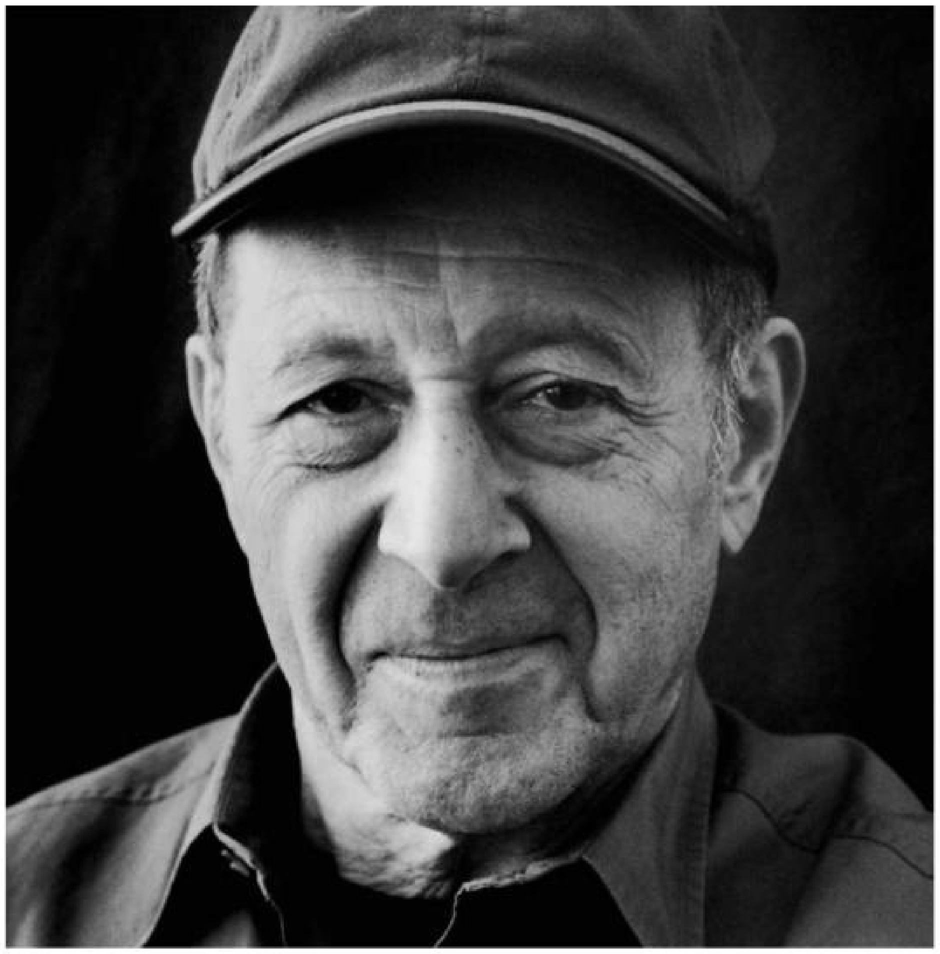
Our critics cast their eyes over this month's selection of books on classical music

Conversations
Steve Reich
Hanover Square 352pp (hb) £20.87

Inspired by Stravinsky's published discussions with conductor Robert Craft, in *Conversations* Steve Reich preserves his shared reflections with collaborators past and



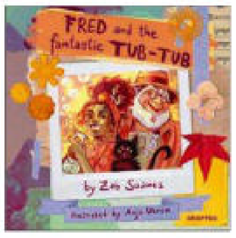
present. Michael Tilson Thomas describes the 1973 performance of *Four Organs* – in which the Carnegie Hall audience was so unruly the conductor had to shout out bar numbers ('When we came off stage and you were white as a sheet, I said to you, nothing like this has happened since *The Rite of Spring*') – while Colin Currie talks about preparing *Drumming* for the 2006 Prom to mark Reich's 70th birthday. Doing away with the usual third-party interviewer has its perks: conversation is natural, personal and, because it is a composer talking to fellow artists, elicits interesting analysis (the impact of Reich being left-handed, or how a violin can double a train whistle, as in *Different Trains*). Most of the conversations took place over Zoom in 2020 (an exception is the 2015 in-person chat with Stephen Sondheim). Unfortunately, each chapter is unimaginatively presented as a straight transcription, which eventually becomes as tedious as a video call itself. *Claire Jackson* ★★★


Artist to artist: Steve Reich has published his conversations with collaborators

GETTY

Fred and the Fantastic Tub-Tub
Zeb Soanes;
Anja Uhren (illustrations)
Graffeg 48pp (hb) £12.99

Originally devised by composer James Marangone as a narrated concert for the Orpheus Sinfonia, *Fred and the Fantastic Tub-Tub* is a children's story with an ambitious vision. At its heart is a crucial environmental message, but along the way it shares the wonders of botany, flying machines and – of course – the universal language of music. Fred is whisked off to the fictitious island of 'Papa Nupi' by her plant-loving grandpa, who longs to hear the 'music' of the rare Tub-Tub plant. The island, however, has become the final resting place for much of the world's plastic, casting the future of the musical plant in doubt. Fred, Grandpa and the islanders

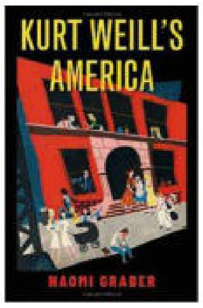


hear its sweet melody, which Fred records and shares online. Before long the world hears it too and works together to stop the pollution. The green message is sweetly optimistic, the music message oft-peddled, but it's beautifully told by Zeb Soanes, and Anja Uhren's illustrations are a delight. The book includes a QR code so that readers can hear Marangone's music, plus tips on how to re-use plastic bottles for planting. *Michael Beek* ★★★★

Kurt Weill's America
Naomi Graber
Oxford University Press
320pp (hb) £22.99

This absorbing book seeks to dispel the myth that there is a dichotomy between Kurt Weill's career as a provocative modernist composer of the Weimar Republic and his later achievements from 1935 onwards as a refugee in the United States, where he carved out a formidable and commercially successful reputation, especially on Broadway. Naomi Graber asserts that the connecting link between these two phases of his life lies in his remarkably fluid concept of America which is manifested in famous works such as the opera *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* or the ballet *The Seven Deadly Sins*.

Although Graber probes the Americanisms of his Weimar



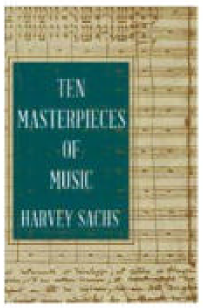
Republic output in some detail, her main focus here is to chart various different preoccupations (for example, social engagement, American folklore and Jewish heritage) of his later period. Thanks to her painstakingly detailed research, the picture that emerges of the composer is far richer and more influential than I had previously imagined, not least with regard to the significant impact of his work on later composers such as Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim. *Erik Levi* ★★★★

Ten Masterpieces of Music
Harvey Sachs
Liveright 336pp (hb) £23.99

The clue to the contents of this richly enjoyable book is in the title. It is not 'The Ten Masterpieces of Music', but a selection of great works that allow Harvey Sachs to expand and enrich our knowledge and experience of the classical tradition from the 1780s through to the 1960s.

As Sachs points out, his choice was shaped by each work's propensity for forming a vital part of a sweeping narrative. Pointing out the similarities and differences between Mozart's and Beethoven's musical worlds, for example, is made all the more poignant by focusing analytically on the former's K453 Piano Concerto and the latter's 'Archduke' Piano Trio.

Sachs then traces the Romantic mainstream via five archetypal masterworks, bookended by



two pieces of chamber music: Schubert's D887 String Quartet, and the Op. 111 String Quintet by a composer who played a vital role in rescuing Schubert's music from oblivion – Brahms. In between comes a song cycle: Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, a generic hybrid; Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust*; and an operatic blockbuster, Verdi's *Don Carlos*.

Encapsulating the first half (or so) of 20th-century music via Sibelius's Fourth Symphony, Prokofiev's Eighth Piano Sonata and Stravinsky's *Requiem Canticles*, may seem a tall order, yet such is Sachs's inspired use of language and syntax that in context the sequence feels logical and almost inevitable. *Julian Haylock* ★★★★

Our expert *Chris Haslam* gives valuable advice on buying and using your hi-fi

How to find the best turntable for your budget

We recommend...

Cambridge Audio Alva ST £850

Blending high-end audiophile quality with plug-and-play wireless versatility, the Alva ST is a belt-drive with built-in phono stage, hi-res streaming aptX HD Bluetooth and a superb Audio Technica AT-VM95e MM cartridge. **cambridgeaudio.com**

Pro-Ject Audio A1 Automat £369

This includes an 8.3" aluminium tone-arm, built-in phono stage, Ortofon OM 10 cartridge precision mechanics and handmade build, plus fumble-proof, fully automatic operation. **henleyaudio.co.uk**

Audio Technica AT-LP3 £260

Though not beautiful, the LP3 is a super-value fully automatic two-speed (33⅓, 45 RPM) belt-drive player with a built-in switchable phono/pre-amplifier and AT91R Dual Moving Magnet phono cartridge. **audio-technica.com**

Top of the range: Naim Audio's limited edition Solstice delivers exceptional quality

Sales of vinyl have continued to soar in recent years, with more than five million albums sold in 2021, an increase of eight per cent. Furthermore, vinyls made up 23 per cent of all physical albums bought last year.

For the uninitiated, choosing a record player isn't always easy – even John Lewis offers multiple models. At the very top end, Naim Audio's turntable, the Solstice, costs £16,000 and if you can afford it is worth every penny (**naimaudio.com**). But for most first-time enthusiasts, a budget of £150-£400 will be enough, with brands such as Pro-Ject, Audio Technica and Rega overflowing with quality designs.

All modern turntables will play records at 33⅓ rpm and 45 rpm, but if you've collected or inherited any classical recordings on shellac you'll need a 78 rpm setting. Some turntables with pitch-shift can manage, but will require a 78 rpm stylus. An exception is Rega's Planar 78 (**£400; rega.co.uk**) which only plays the classics.

Assuming you already have speakers and an amplifier, the next consideration is whether your turntable has a preamp built in. This amplifies the signal to a level that can drive your speakers. There are plenty of separate preamps available from around £150, and while it does mean more clutter, such units can be upgraded.

There are alternatives, however. Bluetooth streaming turntables such as the Sony PS-LX310BT (**£249; Currys**) can stream audio to as many as eight compatible speakers, while the Juke Box E (**£499; project-audio.com**) has preamp and power amp built in – so, you just add speakers.

The boom in vinyl sales has also seen a revival of the all-in-one record player, often boasting retro looks and built-in speakers. These are fun and affordable, but generally sound awful and can prematurely wear down your records, which is unforgivable. Some exceptions exist, however, including the new Victrola V1 (**£399; victrola.com**) which has better quality components, Bluetooth receiver and separate subwoofer.

> The phono cartridge is key to the sound quality from your turntable

Turntables come with a phono cartridge (with stylus), which is key to the sound quality. Isolation, vibration and tracking all play key roles, but the better the cartridge, the better the sound. There are two main types: moving magnets (MM) and moving coil (MC), with MM cartridges the commoner and harder wearing, while MC offers a more detailed and accurate sound, at a price. Thankfully, if you choose a turntable from a reputable brand, you can easily upgrade the cartridge and stylus at a later date.

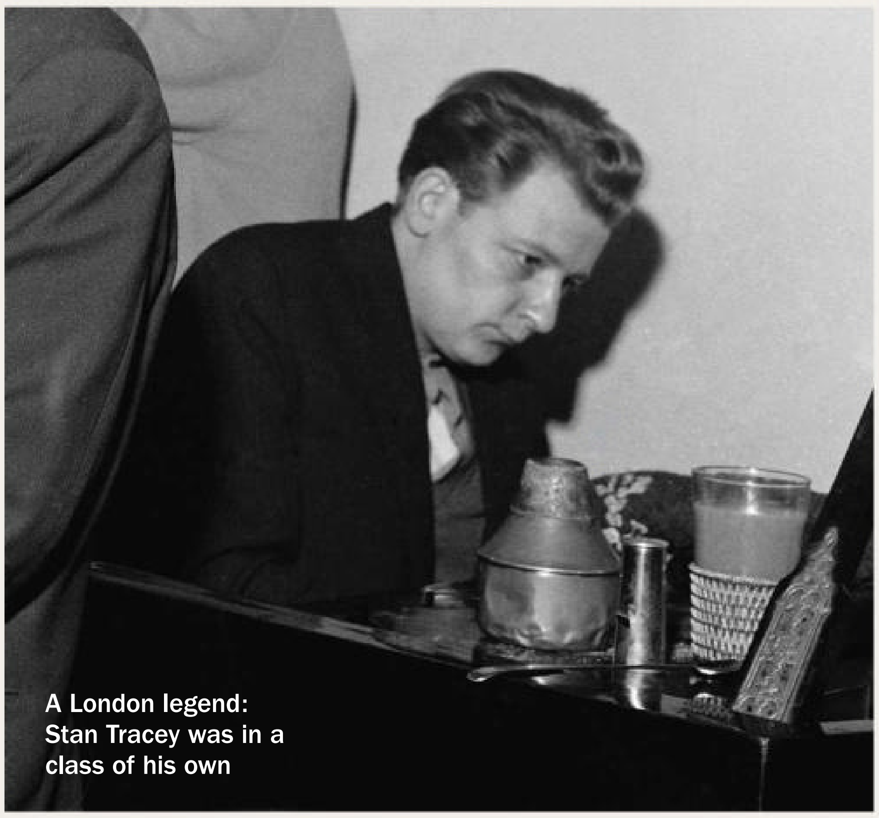
Jazz

Garry Booth offers discs of vindictive vigour alongside the sumptuously smooth

JAZZ CHOICE

Top-form Stan Tracey

Mercifully rescued from a studio clearout, these 1959 tapes show the pianist at his best



A London legend: Stan Tracey was in a class of his own

GETTY

Stan Tracey

The 1959 Sessions

Stan Tracey (piano), Tony Crombie, Phil Seaman (drums), Kenny Napper (bass)
Resteamed Records RSJ 116

Like many of the brilliant modern jazz musicians who emerged in '50s Britain, pianist Stan Tracey was somewhat overshadowed on the international stage by his American counterparts. But as a leader and accompanist possessed of a distinctly percussive and pungent sound, Tracey was an integral part of the London scene for over 50 years. As a composer, especially of longform suites, he was in a class of his own.

This recently unearthed studio session was recorded in 1959 when the 33-year-old Tracey was house pianist at Ronnie Scott's club. Originally intended for LP release, the ¼ inch tapes were discovered by chance in a studio clearout.

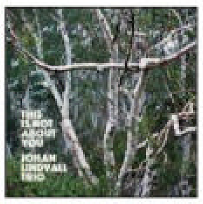
It's a vivid monaural time capsule, capturing Tracey as leader with an idiosyncratic style influenced by his love of Thelonious Monk's unpredictable timing and Duke Ellington's sophisticated swing. Tracey as a composer of breezy Brit bebop is also in evidence, with his own material making up half of the set.

The mischievous reading of 'Jumpin' With Symphony Sid' and a dappled take on 'Moonlight In Vermont' are lovely. The friendly familiarity of originals 'Mood 13' and 'Little Girl Sadly' suggests they're pre-loved standards. ★★★★

What would the 33-year old Stan Tracey have made of ***Kit Downes***'s new trio album ***Vermillion***, his third for ECM? In contrast to

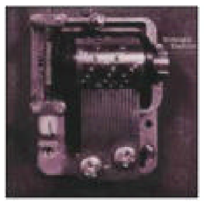
Tracey's deliberate (if unpredictable) style, Downes sounds as if he has freed his mind and allowed it to wander where it will. It's not that simple, of course. Fragments of melody fanned by wafting drum and bass accompaniment (from Petter Eldh and James Maddren respectively) are the product of carefully considered deconstruction. Downes has pointed to the late great John Taylor's influence on his music and it's evident here in the young pianist's sublime lyricism and his textured approach to improvising. *(ECM 388 0001)* ★★★★★

Different again is the music of the ***Johan Lindvall Trio***. The Swedish, Norway-based pianist's second album, ***This Is Not About You***, consists of 11 short pieces that discuss, in a rather prickly way, the difficulty of untangling a relationship. Tunes with sharp titles like 'Imagine Something Different', 'Not Now' and 'Leave me Alone' fit Johan's knotty piano lines. Bassist Adrian Myhr's fretful curlicues and drummer Andreas Skår Winther's



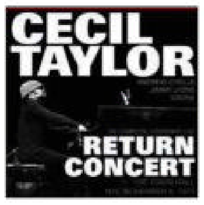
skirmishing stoke the anxiety. It's a strangely pleasurable experience, though, because the pieces or preludes are fresh, unhurried and hang together so well. The final track 'Break', recorded live, sees the trio set free and relaxing into a flowing groove. *(Jazzland 3779430)* ★★★★

Another concept album comes in the shape of ***Nostalgia Machine***, a quintet programme operated by Icelandic guitarist ***Mikael Máni***. He aimed to, and succeeded in, making the sort of music that leaves an imprint on the mind. The medium is a form of impressionistic jazz that makes use of electronica and organic percussion around guitar, reeds and electric bass. Imagine a superior form of north-European *schlager* music with a Bill Frisell-inspired, golden-toned guitar at its centre. The fine musicianship



on display from all involved is complemented by superb production from US record industry legend Matt Pierson. *(Smekkleysa SMJ 12 CD)* ★★★★

The avant-garde pianist ***Cecil Taylor***, who died in 2018, always left a lingering mark on his audience. Of his 1957 debut, fabled jazz writer Whitney Balliett said his music 'rejects both the listener and standard jazz procedure with an almost vindictive vigour'. Fast forward to 1973 and Taylor's first live performance after a two-year teaching break took place at New York's Town Hall. This previously



unreleased quartet live recording, ***Return Concert***, with Jimmy Lyons (alto sax), Andrew Cyrille (drums) and Sirone (bass) is reliably discombobulating. The torrential piano playing across shifting rhythmic patterns, matched by Lyons's chattering sax and the bass/drum duo's destruction derby is simply awesome. *(Oblivion Records OD-8)* ★★★★★

The pianist ***Dave Arch*** stands at the other end of the accessibility scale. Arch is a household name in the UK as the miracle-working musical director and arranger of BBC TV's *Strictly Come Dancing*, providing dance themes live and in

every conceivable style. Left to his own devices he's teamed up with journeyman guitarist John Parricelli (and drummer Paul Clarvis) to make a slicker-than-slick fusion album, ***True Colours***. The programme is a '70s throwback, but sumptuous studio work by the duo, and the ethereal vocalese of Daisy Chute on three numbers, elevates the potentially cheesy sentiment to a higher level. *(Linn CKD 678)* ★★★

TAKE FIVE

An interview with today's finest jazz musicians

Good vibrations: vibraphone master Joel Ross

This month: Joel Ross

With its silvery tone and shimmering vibrato, the vibraphone has always occupied a niche slot in jazz. It says much about the young Brooklyn-based player and composer Joel Ross that he's making such an impact with the instrument. Part of a spiritually energised jazz new wave, alongside trumpeter Marquis Hill and altoist Immanuel Wilkins, the 26 year-old has just released his third Blue Note album, *The Parable of the Poet*.

Ross grew up in Chicago with police officer parents, on a diet of gospel and soul music. A precocious talent, he switched from drums to xylophone at ten. 'After the age of ten, I was exposed to blues and jazz. Then it was Milt "Bags" Jackson, Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane,' he says.

'Your emotional attachment to the sound helps you to improvise naturally'

But the jazz deal was sealed by a meeting with inspirational vibraharpist and educator Stefon Harris while Ross was at High School. At the University of the Pacific in California, Harris first revamped Ross's technique with mallets to keep his arms safe from RSI – and then set about training his ear. 'Stefon has a theory that develops your improvising. It focuses on your emotional attachment to the sound rather than on scales and chords. It helps you play something that's not based on a previous idea or link, but to improvise naturally.'

The techniques he learnt from Harris have contributed to his own ideology as a leader, starting with his regular group Good Vibes: 'With the band, it's not about what I play, it's about what we're creating, composing together.' Ross focuses on honing communication in improvisation across different forms of music and ensembles: 'When everyone is on the same page and communicating the message of the music it comes across clearly to the audience, even if it's in an unusual time signature.'

He used the concept for the new nonet album, a combination of collective melody playing and spontaneous counterpoint: 'We start with a melody, chords, maybe a bassline as a skeleton, and then work to give it some life and serve the music.' ***Garry Booth***

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Live choice

Paul Riley picks the month's best concert and opera highlights in the UK

Hallé Orchestra
Sage Gateshead, 1 April
Web: *halle.co.uk*
Paganini might have been initially underwhelmed by it, but Berlioz's viola-showcasing *Harold in Italy* is a violist's dream. Timothy Ridout undertakes the Byronic limelight in a concert conducted by Lionel Bringuier that, having dipped into Smetana's riverscape *Vltava*, returns to Italy for Tchaikovsky's *Francesca da Rimini*.

The Sixteen
Winchester Cathedral, 2 April
Web: *thesixteen.com*
The ensemble's annual 'Choral Pilgrimage' reaches Winchester. Conducted by Harry Christophers, Parry's *Songs of Farewell* and Howells's *Take him, Earth, for Cherishing* frame a sequence of medieval carols and settings of Campion which in turn frame a new work by Cecilia McDowall.

Keyboard games: toy piano enthusiast Xenia Pestova Bennett performs in Belfast

English National Opera
Coliseum, London, 4-14 April
Web: *eno.org*
ENO's new artistic director Annilese Miskimmon introduces herself with a production of Poul Ruders's take on Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale.* Joana Carneiro conducts a cast including Kate Lindsey as Offred.

Tenebrae
Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, 5 April
Web: *bridgewater-hall.co.uk*
Tenebrae delves into a rich seam of Marian music, ranging from Gregorian Chant to Tavener, Górecki and Giles Swayne. Director Nigel Short contrasts settings of the Ave Maria by Parsons, Bruckner and Stravinsky, and includes a Stabat Mater by the 17th-century nun Sister Sulpitia Cesis.

Joyce DiDonato
Barbican, London, 5, 6 April
Web: *barbican.org.uk*
Spread across four years and five continents, the American mezzo's latest project grapples with issues around the natural world. Accompanied by Il Pomo d'Oro, she vocalises the trumpet part of Ives's *The Unanswered Question* and gives the UK premiere of Rachel Portman's *The First Morning of the World*.

Sonorities Festival
Queen's University, Belfast, 6-10 April
Web: *sonorities.net*
The Belfast biennial marks 40 years of championing the new with some hundred artists, including composer and toy piano enthusiast Xenia Pestova Bennett, piano and percussion duo Czajka & Puchacz with musician/programmer Gianluca Elia, and South Korean cellist Okkyung Lee.

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Royal Albert Hall, London, 7 April
Web: *rpo.co.uk*
'This is the best of me,' wrote Elgar on the score of *The Dream of Gerontius* (see p62). Conductor Vasily Petrenko assembles a fine cast of soloists as part of his British Choral Masterworks series. Mezzo Christine Rice, tenor Ed Lyon and baritone Roderick Williams join the Philharmonia Chorus for a performance prefaced by Wagner's Prelude to *Parsifal*.

Scottish Chamber Orchestra
Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, 7 April
Web: *sco.org.uk*
The saltire flies proudly, with Edinburgh-based percussionist Colin Currie the soloist in the Percussion Concerto by Aberdeenshire-raised Helen Grime. But conductor Clemens Schuldt also has desert islands to explore in opera overtures by Haydn and Eberl, ahead of Beethoven's Symphony No. 4.

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool, 7 April
Web: *liverpoolphil.com*
The great *Adagio* first movement of Mahler's uncompleted Symphony No. 10 sets the scene for a near-contemporary expressionist masterpiece: Bartók's opera *Bluebeard's Castle*. Károly Szemerédy is the eponymous Duke, with Jennifer Johnston as the hapless Judith. Domingo Hindoyan conducts.

Ludlow English Song Weekend
Ludlow, 8-10 April
Web: *ludlowenglishsongweekend.com*
'Normal service has been resumed' proclaims director Iain Burnside as the Song Weekend offers live performances between St Laurence's Church and the Assembly Rooms. From late-night lute songs to an Anglo-German odyssey featuring baritone Benjamin Appl, Shropshire has plenty to sing about. (See 'Backstage with…' right.)

BBC National Orchestra & Chorus of Wales
St David's Hall, Cardiff, 9 April
Web: *stdavidshallcardiff.co.uk*
Conductor Harry Bicket leads a performance of JS Bach's most elaborately conceived setting of the Passion narrative: the *St Matthew*. It fields two

choruses, each with its own orchestra, plus a ripieno children's choir. Gwilym Bowen is the Evangelist and David Shipley sings the role of Christus.

Accademia Bizantina
Milton Court, London, 9 April
Web: *barbican.org.uk*
From Baroque to pop, American countertenor John Holiday takes everything in his stride. Here, however, it's Vivaldi all the way as he teams up with Ottavio Dantone's ensemble for a portrait of the Red Priest that spans sacred and secular. Multi-violin concertos from *L'estro armonico* and the seasonal foursome Op. 8 are programmed alongside *Nisi Dominus*, RV608 and the *Stabat Mater*, RV621.

Ulster Orchestra
Ulster Hall, Belfast, 15 April
Web: *ulsterorchestra.org.uk*
Brahms is at the heart of conductor Christoph Altstaedt's Good Friday meditation. The composer's choral works *Begräbnisgesang, Nänie* and *Schicksalslied* plus the *Alto Rhapsody* are performed alongside the music of two of his friends: Schumann (*Nachtlied*), and Dvořák (the *Biblical Songs*).

Easter Weekend
Snape Maltings, 15, 16 April
Web: *brittenpearsarts.org*
The traditional mini-festival celebrates the half-century of the Britten Pears Young Artists Programme with soloists from the scheme featured in the closing concert. The Heath Quartet performs Purcell, Schulhoff and Janáček, while The Gesualdo Six spikes Renaissance polyphony with Judith Bingham and a new work by Joanna Ward.

Royal Opera House
Covent Garden, London, 19 April –14 May
Web: *roh.org.uk*
Jakub Hruša takes the baton for this first revival of the 2019 David Alden staging of Wagner's *Lohengrin*, set in a timeless dystopia. Jennifer Davis returns to the role of Elsa opposite the Swan Knight sung by American tenor Brandon Jovanovich.

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra
City Halls, Glasgow, 21 April
Web: *glasgowconcerthalls.com*
With the exception of Dvořák's Brahms-inspired Symphony No. 7, conductor Marin Alsop ploughs a resolutely contemporary furrow, prefacing Christopher Rouse's Flute Concerto (soloist Adam Walker) with James MacMillan's 1990 BBC Proms triumph: *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*.

Sacconi Quartet
Colyer-Fergusson Hall, Canterbury, 24 April
Web: *sacconi.com*
Robin Holloway composed his Clarinet Concerto for the 1400th anniversary of St Augustine's arrival in Canterbury, and now the cathedral city hosts the world premiere of his Clarinet Quintet. Clarinettist Mark Simpson isn't the only addition to the Sacconi Quartet – flautist Thomas Hancox and harpist Rachel Wick also pitch in for Ravel's Introduction and Allegro.

London Sinfonietta
Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, 27 April
Web: *southbankcentre.co.uk*
The London Sinfonietta presents no fewer than 24 new works this season, and this 'Leaning East' programme trains its gaze on Poland with two of them. Jessica Cottis conducts the world premiere of Wojciech Błażejczyk's reworked Concerto for Electric Guitar and Paweł Mykietyn's *Prank*. First up is a contemporary classic: Penderecki's 1992 Sinfonietta for Strings.

Royal Scottish National Orchestra
Usher Hall, Edinburgh, 29 April
Web: *rsno.org.uk*
Conductor Thomas Søndergård has a mountain to climb. Two, in fact: Alfvén's *The Mountain King* Suite adroitly paves the way to Richard Strauss's epic *Alpine Symphony*. Before them, the terrain is Scottish with a newly revised version of Jay Capperauld's *Fèin-Aithne*.

London Philharmonic Orchestra
Royal Festival Hall, London, 30 April
Web: *southbankcentre.co.uk*
'OK!', the LPO and Edward Gardner's tribute to the late Oliver Knussen, couldn't be more deftly plotted. Suites from Britten's *The Prince of the Pagodas* and Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* follow Knussen's own *Flourish with Fireworks*, Horn Concerto (soloist Ben Goldscheider) and the *Whitman Settings* (sung by Sophie Bevan).

BACKSTAGE WITH...
Pianist Iain Burnside

Wide choice: 'My problem as artistic director is having too many ideas!'

DIMITRI DJURIC, TALL WALL MEDIA

'Normal service has been resumed', you write on the website of the Ludlow English Song Weekend, of which you are artistic director. What does 'normal service' mean?
Well, we did do a weekend in November to make up for the missing one last spring, but it wasn't quite the same. The event has been running in one form or another since 2002, and people said back then that there's not enough repertoire, that we'll run out of ideas and so on, but it's amazing how it regenerates with different artists and different enthusiasms. The problem for me artistic director is, in fact, being selective and not having too many ideas!

Although the event has 'English Song' in its title, it's not just restricted to that in this year's programme, is it?
No. Baritone Benjamin Appl's 'My Own Country' recital on the Saturday morning is something of a club sandwich, if you like. The idea there is that we match English songs to German lieder that talk to one another – so, for instance, a Mahler military song would talk to an Arthur Somervell military song. Without wanting to be too dry and didactic, we've paired pieces from the two different traditions that have something in common and are so often closer than people might think.

Is this the first occasion on which you have ventured beyond English song, then?
That partly depends on how you define 'English song', of course. We've had Scottish songs in there in the past, one year we had we had an Irish focus for the whole weekend – which worked brilliantly – and we've had American songs too. Though 'English' could refer in the broader sense to the language of the songs rather than the country itself, I have to admit that during that Irish weekend we actually had a couple in Gaelic!

Tell us a little about the town and its venues…
Ludlow is the dream place for a little festival like this. It's very pretty, with lovely coffee and lunch places, and as the two venues are only a leisurely five-minute walk apart, it feels very sociable too. Most of the concerts are in St Laurence's Church – sometimes described as 'The Cathedral of the Marches' – and we also use the Assembly Rooms, which is better for spoken-word events. The poet AE Housman is buried in the churchyard of St Laurence's, incidentally, so settings of his *A Shropshire Lad* do crop up in the programme quite often.

TV&Radio

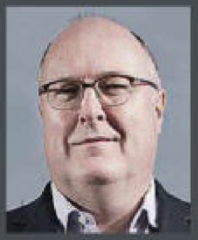
Your complete guide to what's on Radio 3 this month, plus TV highlights

BBC RADIO 3 90–93FM

APRIL'S RADIO 3 LISTINGS

Schedules may be subject to alteration. For up-to-date listings see Radio Times

Three to look out for



Alan Davey, the controller of BBC Radio 3, picks out three great moments to tune into this April

One-Hit Wonders

Horn player Sarah Willis delves into the composers you undoubtedly know, but perhaps just for a single work. She looks at how the likes of Pachelbel's Canon, Dukas's *Sorcerer's Apprentice* and Górecki's *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs* interacted with contemporary culture.
Composer of the Week: 18-22 April, 12 noon

Europe's Young Performers

If you're struck by a bout of insomnia, listen out for our three-night special from Europe's top young musicians. Concerts will be given by the continent's youth orchestras, BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists and major competition winners.
Through the Night: 23-25 April, 1am

Music for Holy Week from Europe

The European Broadcasting Union celebrates Palm Sunday with Easter music from across the continent. As well as a performance of JS Bach's *St John's Passion* from the Concertgebouw, there will be contemporary choral music from Riga and sacred Easter music from Moscow and Denmark.
10 April, 7.30pm

1 FRIDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Biber (rpt). Donald Macleod explores the music and what little is known of the life of Baroque master Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert live from the Barbican, London. Canadian conductor Jordan de Souza makes his UK concert debut. Édith Canat de Chizy *Omen* (UK premiere), Vaughan Williams *Concerto for Two Pianos*, Berlioz *Symphonie fantastique*. Noriko Ogawa (piano), Kathryn Stott (piano), BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Jordan de Souza
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-1am Late Junction

2 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert
10pm-12 midnight New Music Show
12 midnight-1am Freeness

3 SUNDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning
12 noon-1pm Private Passions Francesco da Mosto (architect, author, historian)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert (rpt)
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-5.30pm The Listening Service
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Sunday Feature I Arrive Without Leaving
7.30-9pm Drama on 3
9-11pm Record Review Extra
11pm-12am Sunday Series
12-12.30am Classical Fix

4 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Elmer Bernstein
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon Concert
4.30-5pm New Generation Artists
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay EarthWorks
11pm-12.30am Northern Drift

5 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Elmer Bernstein
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Kings Place, London. Voices Unwrapped. Victoria *O Vos Omnes*, Reena Esmail *When the Violin*, Caroline Shaw *Entr'acte*, Vaughan Williams *Fantasia on a theme by Thomas Tallis*, James MacMillan *Seven Last Words from the Cross*. BBC Singers, Aurora Orchestra/Sofi Jeannin
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay EarthWorks
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

6 WEDNESDAY

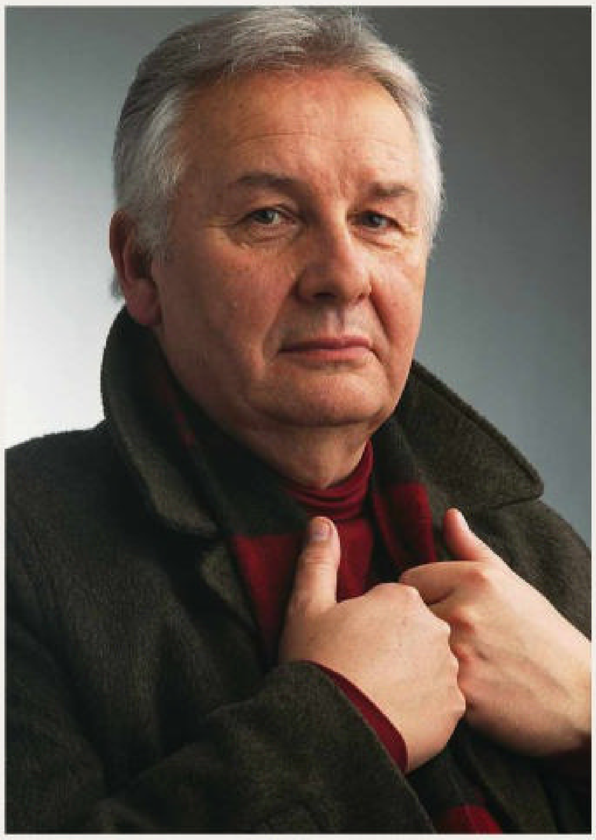
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Elmer Bernstein
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Afternoon Concert
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool. Brahms *Piano Concerto No. 1*, Tchaikovsky *Symphony No. 6 'Pathétique'*. Stephen Hough (piano), Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra/Domingo Hindoyan
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay EarthWorks
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

7 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Elmer Bernstein
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert live from the Royal Festival Hall, London. Pictures of Russia: a vivid, all-Russian programme. Shostakovich *October*, Prokofiev *Violin Concerto No. 2*, Musorgsky orch. Ravel *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Gil Shaham (violin), Philharmonia Orchestra/ Stanislav Kochanovsky
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay EarthWorks
11-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

8 FRIDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Elmer Bernstein
1-5pm See Thurs 7 April
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert live from the Barbican, London. Romantics in Exile. Korngold *Violin Concerto*, Langgaard *Symphony No. 1 'Klippepastoraler'*. Nicola



Gateway to Europe: the German National Youth Orchestra; (top right) Henryk Górecki; (right) the Royal Concertgebouw

Benedetti (violin), BBC Symphony Orchestra/ Sakari Oramo
10-10.45pm The Verb
10.45-11pm The Essay EarthWorks
11pm-1am Late Junction

9 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert
10pm-12 midnight New Music Show
12 midnight-1am Free the Music

10 SUNDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning
12 noon-1pm Private Passions Sister Teresa Keswick (Carmelite nun, former London lawyer) with music by Handel, Beethoven, Simon and Garfunkel and Verdi (rpt)
1-4pm Radio 3 in Concert live from the Concertgebouw. Bach *St John Passion.* Regula Mühlemann (soprano), Catriona Morison (mezzo-soprano), Mauro Peter (tenor), Maximilian Schmitt (tenor), Ashley Riches (bass), Florian Boesch (bass), Laurens Collegium Rotterdam, Concertgebouw Orchestra/ Trevor Pinnock
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-5.30pm The Listening Service
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Sunday Feature Krishnamurti
CHOICE 7.30-9pm Music for Holy Week from Europe
9-11pm Record Review Extra
11pm-12am Sunday Series
12-12.30am Classical Fix

11 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Haydn (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon Concert
4.30-5pm New Generation Artists
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Northern Drift

12 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Haydn (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. A concert from the Bridgewater Hall's season-long Vaughan Williams celebration. Vaughan Williams *Flourish for Glorious John, Symphony No. 7 'Sinfonia Antartica', A London Symphony.* Sarah Fox (soprano), Ladies of the Manchester Chamber Choir, BBC Philharmonic/John Wilson
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

13 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Haydn (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Afternoon Concert
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from St David's Hall, Cardiff. Six young soloists join the BBC National Orchestra & Chorus of Wales in one of classical music's greatest portrayals of the final days of Christ. Bach *St Matthew Passion.* Gwilym Bowen (tenor), David Shipley (bass), Mhairi Lawson (soprano), Jess Dandy (contralto), Anthony Gregory (tenor), James Newby (baritone), BBC National Chorus of Wales, BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Harry Bicket
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

14 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics

GETTY

Best of British: The Marian Consort on our nation's cultural past

TV CHOICE
The Art That Made Us

The BBC presents a major new cultural history of the British Isles, exploring how various significant works of music, art, literature and design have helped create and shape our creative history. The eight-part series will air in April on BBC Two and BBC iPlayer, accompanied by a nationwide festival, created in collaboration with museums, galleries, libraries and archives, which will take place throughout the month of April.

Members of ensembles such as the Marian Consort and the ORA Singers will join artists, actors, poets and commentators in tracing the stories of innovators and rule-breakers from the cultural history of the British Isles.

The series focuses on specific works of art from all genres that emerged at times of crisis, from the Black Death, Civil War and the religious upheaval of the Reformation to the Industrial Revolution, World Wars and rise of a multicultural society.
BBC Two and BBC iPlayer: date and time TBC

12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Haydn (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert live from City Halls, Glasgow. Wagner *Parsifal: Prelude, Good Friday Music*, Mozart *Concert aria: Ah, lo previdi!*, Strauss *Ein Heldenleben (A Hero's Life)*. Sophie Bevan (soprano), BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Mark Elder
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay
11-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified with Elizabeth Alker

15 FRIDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Haydn (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.45pm In Tune Mixtape
7.45-10pm Radio 3 in Concert live from King's College, Cambridge. Good Friday concert. Mozart *Mass in C minor*. BBC Concert Orchestra
10-10.45pm The Verb
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-1am Late Junction

16 SATURDAY
7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-10pm Opera on 3
10pm-12 midnight New Music Show
12 midnight-1am Free the Music

17 SUNDAY
7-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning
12 noon-1pm Private Passions Tim Birkhead (ornithologist, professor of behaviour and evolution at the University of Sheffield, expert in promiscuity and the mating system in birds)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert (rpt)
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-5.30pm The Listening Service
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Between the Ears The Society of Recordists
7.30-9pm Drama on 3
9-11pm Record Review Extra
11pm-12am Sunday Series
12-12.30am Classical Fix

18 MONDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
CHOICE 12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week One-Hit Wonders with Sarah Willis. Featuring: Pachelbel, Humperdinck, Dukas, Allegri, Pergolesi, Mascagni, Gorecki, Albinoni, Orff, Fucik
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon Concert
4.30-5pm New Generation Artists
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11pm-12.30am Northern Drift

19 TUESDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week One-Hit Wonders
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Wigmore Hall, London. A programme highlighting rare pieces from the Baroque period, with oratorio arias and other sacred works. Dolar *Balletto a4 No. 1: Intrada*, Reutter *La Betulia liberata: D'ogni colpa la colpa maggiore*, Lotti *Proh quantae sunt in orbe strages, Salve sis, o Mater pia*, Almeida *La Giuditta: Giusto Dio*, Galuppi *Concerto a4 No. 4*, Schiassi *Maria Vergine al Calvario: A che si serbano*, Nucci *Il David trionfante: Dal beato eccelso volo*, Vivaldi *Beatus vir: Peccator videbit*, Brescianello *Chaconne in A*, Fux *Il fonte della salute aperto dalla grazia nel Calvario: Non t'amo per il ciel*, Perez *Mass a5: Gratias agimus tibi*, Handel *Amen, Alleluia in D minor*. Jakub Józef Orliński (countertenor), Il Pomo d'Oro/Francesco Corti
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

20 WEDNESDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week One-Hit Wonders
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Afternoon Concert
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from Britten Studio, Snape Maltings. New Generation Artists in Concert. Dvořák *String Quartet No. 9*, Chausson *Concert for Violin, Piano and String Quartet*, *Chanson perpétuelle, Op. 37*. Tom Borrow (piano), Ionel Manciu (violin), Ema Nikolovska (mezzo-soprano), Quatuor Van Kuijk, Mithras Trio
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

21 THURSDAY
6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week One-Hit Wonders
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert live from Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Launch of the Hallé and BBC Philharmonic's Vaughan Williams symphony cycle, celebrating the 150th anniversary of his birth. This concert will pair works by Vaughan Williams and Holst, who were lifelong friends. Vaughan Williams *Symphony No. 9*, Holst *The Planets*. Hallé Choir, Hallé Orchestra/John Wilson
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11-11.30pm Night Tracks

Eyes on the prize: Gianandrea Noseda joins the LSO (22 April)

11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified with Elizabeth Alker

22 FRIDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week One-Hit Wonders
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from the Barbican, London. Beethoven *Piano Concerto No. 5*, Shostakovich *Symphony No. 15*. Beatrice Rana (piano), London Symphony Orchestra/ Gianandrea Noseda
10-10.45pm The Verb
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11pm-1am Late Junction

23 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-10pm Opera on 3
10pm-12 midnight New Music Show
12 midnight-1am Free the Music
BBC Radio 3 **CHOICE 1-7am Through the Night** Tonight's main concert is given by the Young Euro Classic Orchestra – a collaboration between French and German National Youth orchestras, performing French music alongside Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto. Other highlights of the night include winners of the Swiss Youth Music Competition, the Spanish El Primer Palau young talent series, the Italian RAI Radio 3 Quirinale concerts, and the Romanian Youth High-Performing Young Musicians

24 SUNDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning
12 noon-1pm Private Passions Katherine Rundell (children's author, academic, fellow of All Souls College, Oxford)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert (rpt)
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4.30pm Choral Evensong
4.30-5.30pm Jazz Record Requests
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Sunday Feature The Ancient Algorithm
7.30-9pm Drama on 3 Antony and Cleopatra
9-11pm Record Review Extra
11pm-12am Sunday Series
12-12.30am Classical Fix
12.30-6.30am Through the Night For tonight's main concert it's the turn of the German National Youth Orchestra, with a programme of Beethoven, Rautavaara and Dvořák. The night also features prizewinners from the George Enescu International Competition, the Queen Elisabeth Piano Competition, the Euroradio Top Young Performers Series and the Prix Credit Suisse Jeunes Solistes

25 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Brahms (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon Concert
4.30-5pm New Generation Artists
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11pm-12.30am Northern Drift
12.30-6.30am Through the Night For the final concert of the series, the Swiss National Youth Orchestra present a programme of Haydn and Beethoven, as well as a piece written for them by a former member. There's also a young conductor winner of the Eric Ericson Award, the winner of the Chopin Piano Competition, and music from the inaugural concert from the German National Youth Chorus

26 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Brahms (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from City Halls, Glasgow. A new work by singer Karine Polwart and sound designer Pippa Murphy is inspired by the migration of birds, the birth of constellations and singing in the dark, weaving together spoken

Green shoots: Karine Polwart praises the natural world in her new work

word, song and instrumental music. Beethoven *Romance No. 1*, Andrea Tarrodi *Birds of Paradise*, Karine Polwart/Pippa Murphy *Seek the Light* (Scottish Chamber Orchestra commission, world premiere), Erkki-Sven Tüür *Insula Deserta*, Vasks *Violin Concerto 'Distant Light'*. Karine Polwart (singer), Pekka Kuusisto (violin), Scottish Chamber Orchestra
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

27 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Brahms (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4pm Afternoon Concert
4-5pm Choral Evensong
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from the Royal Festival Hall, London. Elgar *Violin Concerto*, Enescu *Symphony No. 2*. Julia Fischer (violin), London Philharmonic Orchestra/ Vladimir Jurowski
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11pm-12.30am Night Tracks

28 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Brahms (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert from City Halls, Glasgow. A programme steeped in Scottish, Celtic and Czech folk traditions. James MacMillan *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, Rouse *Flute Concerto*, Dvořák *Symphony No. 7*. Adam Walker (flute), BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Marin Alsop
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified with Elizabeth Alker

29 FRIDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Brahms (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-5pm Afternoon Concert
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm In Tune Mixtape
7.30-10pm Radio 3 in Concert live from Hoddinott Hall, Cardiff. CoLaboratory: a concert series exploring experimental collaborations that fuse musical styles, as well as presenting new music influenced by Wales and its language. Milhaud *La Création du Monde*, Luke Styles *Saxophone Concerto* (world premiere), Fiona Monbet *Trois Reflets*. Iain Ballamy (saxophone), BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Fiona Monbet (violin)
10-10.45pm The Verb
10.45-11pm The Essay New Generation Thinkers
11pm-1am Late Junction

30 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9-11.45am Record Review
11.45am-12.30pm Music Matters
12.30-1pm This Classical Life
1-3pm Inside Music
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Music Planet
5-6.30pm J to Z
6.30-10pm Opera on 3
10pm-12 midnight New Music Show
12 midnight-1am Free the Music

QUIZ ANSWERS from p104
1. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
2. Johannes Brahms
3. Mahler's Sixth Symphony
4. Juan Diego Flórez
5. Lucrezia Borgia
6. Barbara Strozzi
7. a) The piano; b) The clarinet; c) The bassoon
8. Dion Dublin
9. Both died (or were presumed dead) in the English Channel
10. a) 39; b) 26

GETTY, NICK RUTTER, INGRAM WEIR

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THE QUIZ

It's time to put your classical music knowledge to the test...

1. Who died just nine days after conducting the premiere of his Sixth Symphony in St Petersburg on 28 October 1893?

2. After declaring in 1890 that his Second String Quintet would be his last work, who was then inspired by the playing of Richard Mühlfeld to write a Clarinet Trio, a Clarinet Quintet and two Clarinet Sonatas?

3. Which symphony from 1906 concludes with two hammer blows?

4. Mistakenly described as an 'Aztec king' by *The Telegraph*, which tenor sang 'Rule Britannia' dressed as an Inca warrior at the 2016 Last Night of the Proms?

5. As the title character of an opera by Donizetti, the notorious Spanish-Italian noblewoman pictured above poisons her son and five of his friends. Who is she?

6. Which Venetian singer and composer is known today primarily for her eight volumes of songs published between 1644 and 1664?

7. Which instruments are the following generally said to have invented: a) Bartolomeo Cristofori; b) Johann Christoph Denner; c) Jacques-Martin Hotteterre?

8. In 2006, which former footballer invented a percussion instrument called 'The Dube', intended primarily for schoolchildren?

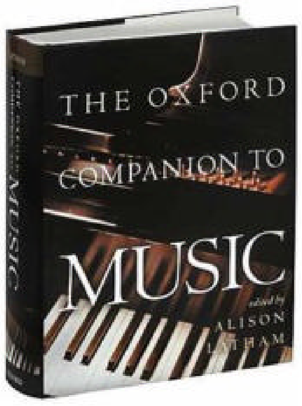
9. What links composer Enrique Granados in March 1916 with bandleader Glenn Miller in December 1944?

10. In Handel's *Messiah*, how many times do the sopranos sing a) 'Hallelujah' in the Hallelujah Chorus; and b) 'Amen' at the end?

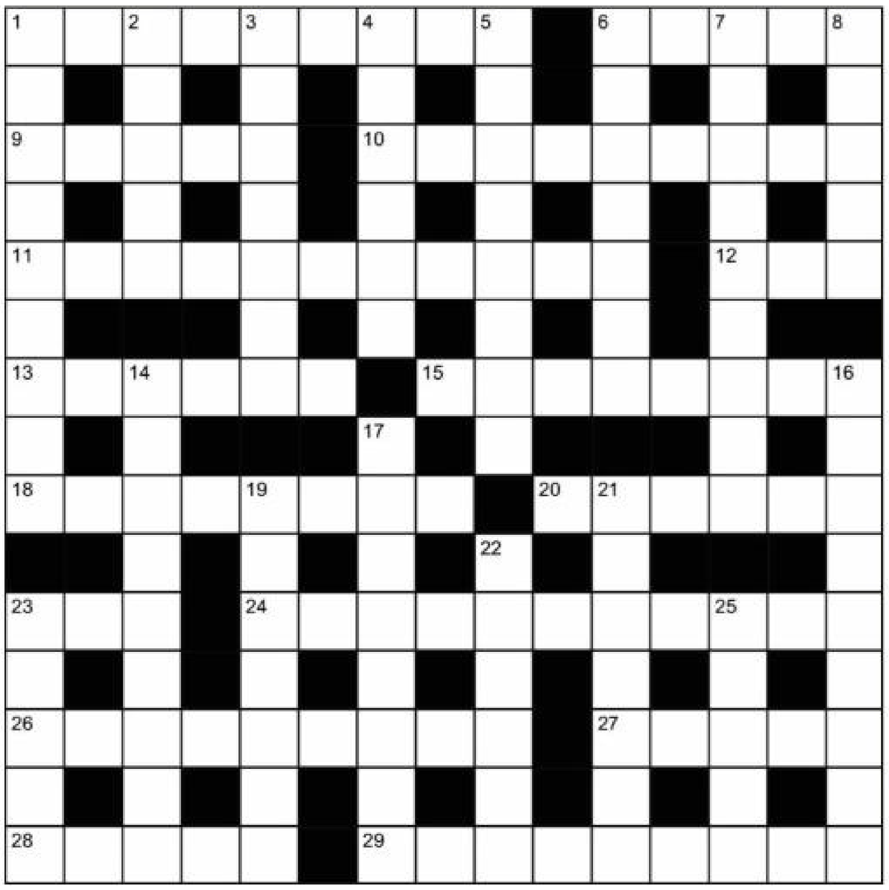
See p103 for answers

The *BBC Music Magazine* PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 371

Crossword set by **Paul Henderson**



The first correct solution of our crossword picked at random will win a copy of **The Oxford Companion to Music.** A runner-up will win **Who Knew? Answers to Questions about Classical Music** (see oup.co.uk). Send answers to: *BBC Music Magazine*, Crossword 371/Apr 2022, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA to arrive by 14 Apr 2022 (solution in July 2022 issue).



Your name & address ....

ACROSS

1 March hit badly with rear of army not following beat? (9)
6 Britten villain to leave holding note (5)
9 *Mefistofele* ultimately televised as it happens, after setback (5)
10 Cancelled arrangement of Field until disposing of end of concert (9)
11 Put chamber concert finally off, to get baroque instrument (4,7)
12 Standard music for instrument left incomplete (3)
13 Selection of music is the best yet (6)
15 Difficult to get surprise in modern genre (4,4)
18 Anglo-German composer left without British percussion instrument (8)
20 French composer's morning bathing in river water in France (6)
23 Operatic hero declining one drink (3)
24 Piece by Liszt possibly generating sublime tear (11)
26 Most of *Coriolan* revamped, with edition that's breezy? (3-6)
27 Symbol seen in scores e.g. note (5)
28/29 Inter-ensemble playing capturing heart of bored film composer (5,9)

DOWN

1 Festival town heard bugle endlessly wound (9)
2 Mostly hold company back for Giles Swayne piece (5)
3 Rattle's arranged Tornados' instrumental hit (7)
4 Male in America bringing in good jazz bassist (6)
5 Top band in unengaging theatre production (8)
6 Somewhat interrupted by last of noise, Schubert piece became less noisy (7)
7 Unexpectedly, he and I do piano, not a percussion instrument (9)
8 Name of consort finally abroad in wild tour (5)
14 Religious woman in company on percussion? That's a puzzle (9)
16 Obscurity lifted over early period about source of high old wind instrument (9)
17 Group of singers giving great pleasure to driver? (4,4)
19 Middle name of composer finishing dance early before quartet (7)
21 Performers in Dire Straits (7)
22 German songs audible? This performer's a violinist (6)
23 Slow music is good before a party (5)
25 Point of view expressed three times in percussion department? (5)

JANUARY SOLUTION
No. 368

JANUARY WINNER
Mrs M Collins, Hampshire

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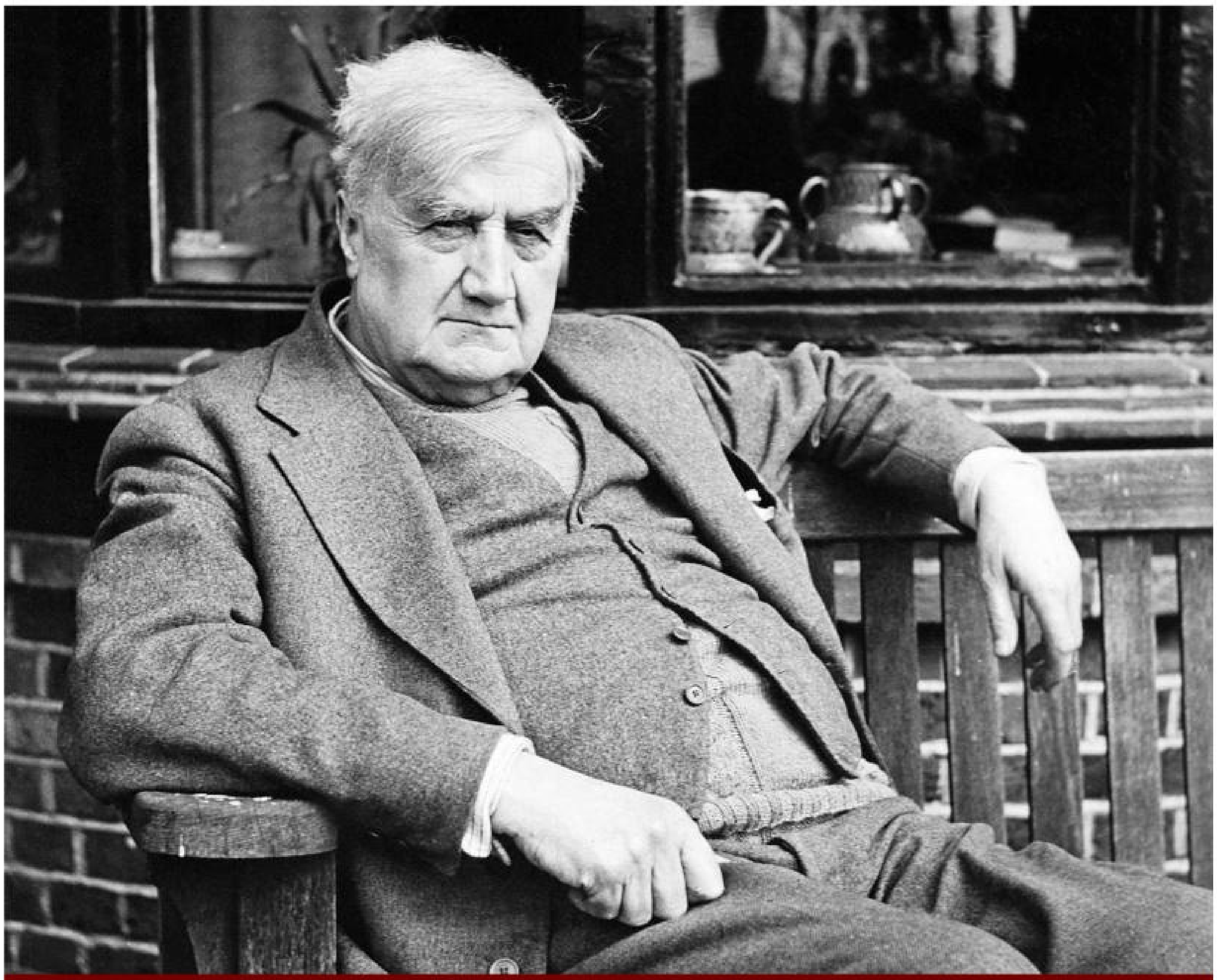

NEXT MONTH on sale from 14 April (UK)

Vaughan Williams

As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the English composer's birth, *Stephen Johnson* explores the inspiration behind his nine symphonies

What's the score? John Wilson conducts Vaughan Williams

GETTY, SIM CANETTY-CLARKE

Vaughan Williams
Symphonies Nos 4 & 6; In the Fen Country

Performed by the BBC Philharmonic, conducted by John Wilson

PLUS! *Geraint Lewis* leads us on the trail of Vaughan Williams's ***The Pilgrim's Progress***; our 22-page guide brings you details of all the best ***music festivals*** in the UK and beyond; *Jeremy Pound* visits the ***Manchester Camerata***; *Steph Power* on the groundbreaking genius of ***Xenakis***; and we send *Claire Jackson* to ***Coventry***, UK City of Culture

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abc Jan-Dec 2020 – 25,734

Music that changed me

Jeannette Sorrell

Conductor and harpsichordist

Jeannette Sorrell is an exuberant interpreter of Baroque and Classical repertoire with Apollo's Fire, the ensemble she founded 30 years ago. Their latest recording, *O Jerusalem!*, presents music from the three main faiths in the ancient city. On 14 April, Sorrell will be conducting the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and soloists in Bach's *St John Passion*.

As a small child, I mostly remember hearing Debussy and Ravel around our San Francisco home – my father was a European immigrant and my parents loved French language and culture. Later, I conducted Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloé* Suite No. 2 while studying under Leonard Bernstein at Aspen and Tanglewood, and I loved it. But I always knew, since the age of 17, that I wanted to focus on historical performance. I bought the LP of Gustav Leonhardt playing JS BACH's D minor Harpsichord Concerto and played it constantly. I was entranced by the way he shaped the orchestra as well as his own line.

I entered university as a piano major but in the second year switched to conducting and had to choose a secondary instrument. I picked the harpsichord and realised my hands were much better suited to it than piano. It was also easy to combine it with conducting. I'd led my own ensemble in church and in high school, for fun, and leading from the keyboard came naturally.

My first conducting performance as a graduate was SCHUBERT's 'Unfinished' Symphony. I loved the experience and have since done the piece with Apollo's Fire – on period instruments it is even more rewarding. The first movement is so agitated and nervous, you feel the pulse of Schubert's beating heart. The second movement is so serene and beautiful and seems to be a vision of heaven.

At university, I was introduced to John Eliot Gardiner's recording of MONTEVERDI's Vespers and I became obsessed with the piece. There are so many decisions you have to make as a conductor because Monteverdi specifies so little in terms of tempo or instrumentation. The tours that I've done – bringing it to new audiences across North America – have been such a joy, and my recording with Apollo's Fire is one of our most popular.

Before graduating, I wrote to Leonhardt enclosing a cassette and saying, 'I want to study with you in Amsterdam'. I remember receiving that blue aerogramme, a handwritten note saying, 'Well, do come then'. It was such an important journey for me and I learnt from him that being an interpreter means you have to have a burning imagination and a crystal-clear conception of how you want the phrase to go. Being a harpsichordist, you're mostly conveying it through force of will because the instrument has so many limitations. In conductor mode, I have to neglect the harpsichord temporarily, but Leonhardt taught me that if you have a relaxed technique, you can go for some months without playing. Luckily, I do – for me, playing the harpsichord is just like dripping water on the keys!

In April, I'm conducting BACH's *St John Passion* for the first time with modern instruments. I first tackled this complex, thrilling piece when I was 32 and I continue to learn something every time I return to it. I now have a definitive approach to the piece, which I call a dramatic presentation. It's semi-staged and my goal is to clarify the structure. I try to inspire all my singers and players to be storytellers – I tell them, the audience sees only my back but your facial expressions are what the audience see and can tap into.

I grew up with Christopher Hogwood and the Academy of Ancient Music's recording of MOZART's Requiem and hearing it on period instruments was life-changing. At 26, I founded my own Baroque ensemble, Apollo's Fire, and we performed the Requiem at our debut concert. It was such an exciting adventure – doing it for the first time with period instruments, with a brand new ensemble! It really did seem to capture the public's attention. This May, exactly 30 years after that debut, we give an anniversary concert at Severance Hall, Cleveland.

Interview by Amanda Holloway

ROGER MASTROIANNI

The choices

JS Bach Harpsichord Concerto in D minor, BWV 1052
Leonhardt Ensemble/Gustav Leonhardt
Sony G0100014158604

Schubert Symphony No. 8, 'Unfinished'
Concentus Musicus Wien/Stefan Gottfried
Aparté AP189

Monteverdi Vespers
Monteverdi Choir; English Baroque Soloists/ John Eliot Gardiner *DG Archiv 429 5652*

Bach St John Passion
Apollo's Fire/Jeannette Sorrell *Avie 2369*

Mozart Requiem
Academy of Ancient Music/Christopher Hogwood *Decca 411 7122*

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